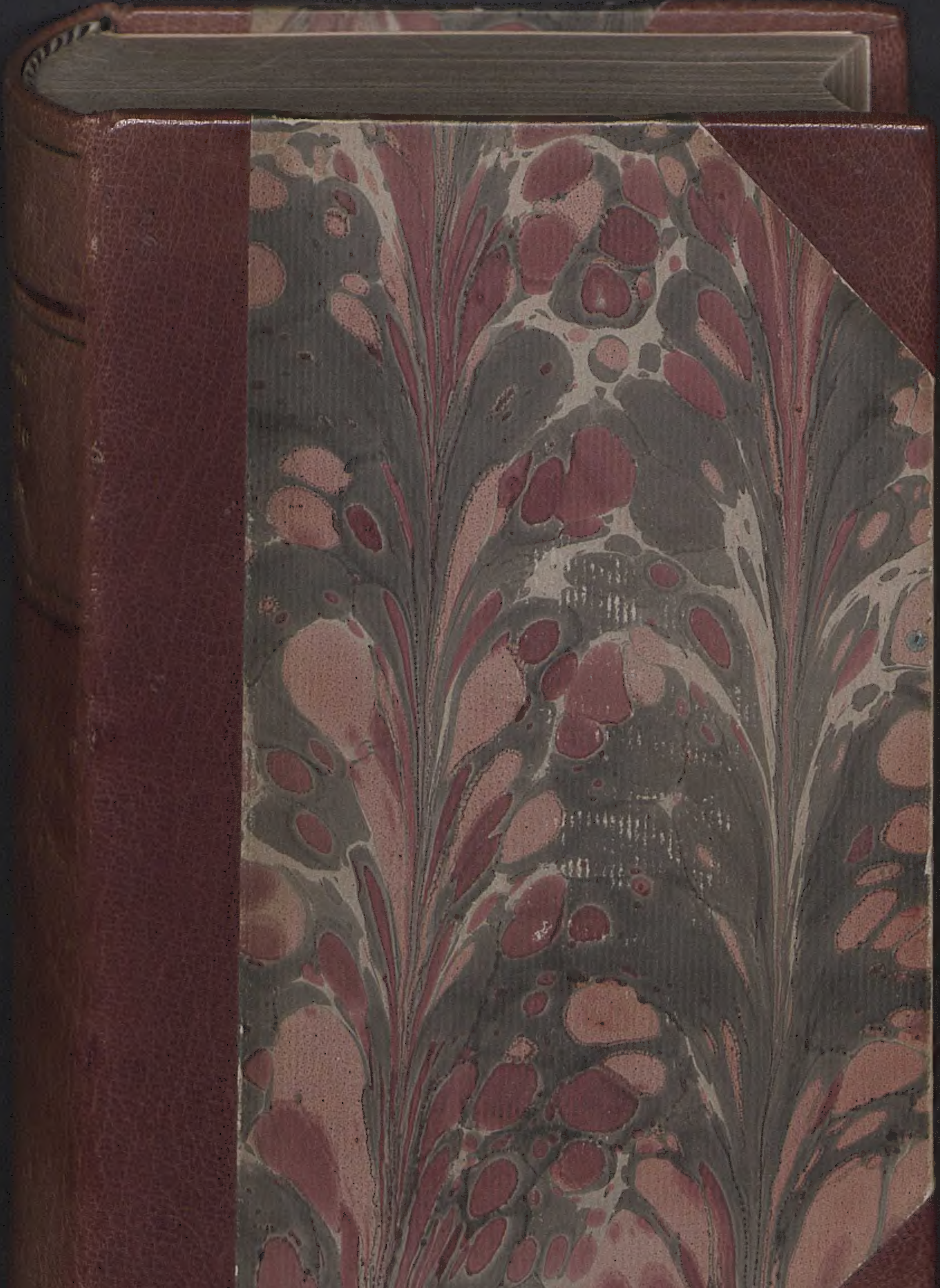

Til Herra Skólakennara
Jóns Þórkelssonar,
virðingarfyllst
frá E. Magnússyni.

LEGENDS OF ICELAND.

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ICELANDIC LEGENDS

(COLLECTED BY JÓN. ARNASON).

TRANSLATED BY

GEORGE E. J. POWELL AND EIRÍKR. MAGNÚSSON.

LANDSBÓKASAFN

SECOND SERIES.

WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

LONDON:
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1866.

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TO

LORD DUFFERIN,

AUTHOR OF

"LETTERS FROM HIGH LATITUDES,"

AND TO

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE QUEEN-MOTHER," "ROSAMUND," "CHASTELARD,"
AND
"*ATALANTA IN CALYDON*,"

The following Work is,

AS A MARK OF SINCERE ESTEEM AND REGARD,
Dedicated

BY

GEORGE E. J. POWELL
AND
EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON.

PREFACE.

ENCOURAGED by the generous welcome accorded us by the reviews and the public, and urged on not less by friendly hands and friendly voices than by our own warm interest in the work, we come forward, this time more confidently, with a Second Series of the LEGENDS of ICELAND.

We have thought fit, as this is our final selection from Mr. Arnason's work, to introduce it with an Essay which shall enable our readers to take a general and comprehensive view of the popular fancy of Iceland; of its mode of regarding the world of wonders, visible nature, and the various phases of human life and character. To students of folk-lore in all its bearings, we sincerely trust that this Introduction may prove valuable: to the general reader, we doubt not that it will be interesting and amusing. We have purposely avoided entering into minute details, preferring to give a broad and clear outline of our subject, rather than to exhaust the pith or spirit of the tales which constitute our volume. By so doing, we believe that the Essay will rather enhance than detract from such interest as the stories may possess.

To students of folk-lore let us point out, that many of the tales in this book have a far deeper moral and meaning than may appear on their surface, or to the reader who glances superficially over them with a view to whiling away a spare half-hour. Upon this undercurrent we should have dwelt in our Introduction, had we not found, early in the day, that, by so doing, we should have converted an essay into a volume almost as large as the one it was intended to preface. Moreover, we should thus have overstepped the limits of our plan. We have therefore thought it better to leave our reader's fancy and ingenuity to colour and shade-in our outline.

As regards our mode of selection we beg to observe, that we have made it a rule to omit such stories as border on what, in English, is called the "Shocking." But every rule has its exceptions; and this rule we have, occasionally for good reasons, (seldom, however, as the reader will see) violated, in the course of the work. "To the pure, all things are pure," let us bear in mind.

In dealing with a folk-lore, such as that of Iceland, it is an extremely difficult task to do full justice to its rude but ingenuous simplicity, on the one side, and to the refined delicacy of the English reader, on the other. Many manners and customs which, in that northern land, excite no attention, and boldly meet the face of day, are by the English regarded as coarse, improper, and the like,—so sensitive is the English moral nature, and so prone to blush the English cheek. But manners, sayings, and customs, sprung from the every-day events of a simple, pastoral life, where necessity, and the hard struggle with a wild nature abroad and poverty within, rule and invent fashions, must, in truth, be more or less opposed to those which arise from an artificial refinement and the hot-house soil of luxury. The wild flower looks strange beside the exotic. Considered in their true light, and regarded from their proper point of view, however, both meet with their due appreciation. And yet, in this case, it is rare to obtain full fair play. A refined reader is too apt to be disgusted at, and to look down upon all that may seem to him to be beneath his standard of life and living, upon everything that descends to the nakedness of nature; albeit, in fact, the true offence may lie in his own over-artificiality. Education, and the surrounding influences of a whole lifetime, have so formed his mind and views, that too often he acts the part of a blind man judging of colours. What a truism it is, that the impropriety of a thing as often exists in the mind of the reader or beholder as in the thing itself! Where omnipotent Custom, blind himself, binds his distorting glasses on men's eyes, how are we to expect their judgments to be correct?

What lady, for instance, of the higher English circles, would not be horrified at having to pass a night in the dormitory of a thriving Icelandic farmer and his family, all of whom, in the simplicity of their purity, would disrobe around her, as if each were in private?

And, on the other hand, what Icelander, fresh from his own land, would not shrink back at the unnecessary display of shoulders in an English ball-room, or fly from the sight of a ballet on an English stage?

In such cases, which would be in the right, and which in the wrong?

We leave this to our readers to decide, with "necessity knows no law" as a key.

A reviewer of our first series of Legends remarked, that, though several of them were *irreverent*, the original conceiver of them was doubtless unconscious of it. This remark is a very just one, and implies a principle very useful for readers to remember, when judging of things that come to them from strange quarters : they should consider the circumstances and sentiments which gave birth to the subject, and then pass their verdict of approbation or displeasure. It is the want of this research that gives birth to forms innumerable of misunderstanding, prejudice, and depreciation.

Upon the simplicity of style and of form of the greater number of our originals we need not comment. We have endeavoured to render closely the originals into as pure and unassuming English as was at our command, avoiding all kinds of ornament no less carefully than a certain baseness of expressson into which the Icelandic occasionally fell. Word-for-word translation, especially in the case of good tales told in low language, was out of the question. But the prevailing features of our originals, their simplicity, their vigour, their tone, and the spirit in which they were written, we have religiously guarded. We have deemed it due to our public to state thus much.

We must reiterate, in other words, what we said in our first Preface: that, when the reader considers that Mr. Arnason's huge work is scarcely a tithe of the mass of legendary lore (our own being a mere drop in the ocean), which, in countless forms, is current in Iceland,—he cannot but grant his tribute of admiration to the fertility of imagination displayed by a people scarcely exceeding sixty thousand in number: of a people, we say, exposed to every hardship which a capricious climate, a barren land, and all the perils of starvation can inflict upon man; of a people oppressed when they should be free. The flame of fancy still burns, bright and warm, in all this desolation, even as the great ice-body of Icelend contains a heart of fire. Surely, of no other nation, all things being considered, can we say as much.

We now conclude, and leave our work to speak for itself.

We hope shortly to produce, should a kind reception of these Legends encourage us, other works of our kinsmen in far-off and little-known Iceland.* Happy indeed shall we count ourselves, if we, by becoming interpreters between Iceland, great in the past, and England, great in the present, can see the fruits of our labour in a growing interest among Englishmen;—here, where every sound from the North finds a natural echo in the depth of the national kindred existing between these brother lands.

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* Egils Saga; Hávardar Saga; &c. (which are nearly ready for press), with Introductory Essay, Notes, and Illustrations.

GEORGE E. J. POWELL.
EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON.

LONDON AND PARIS,
Jan. 8th, 1866.

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

SUBMITTING to the public, as we now do, our final selections of ICELANDIC LEGENDS, we deem it proper, for many reasons, to cast a comprehensive though brief glance over the Icelandic folk-lore, which, in most respects, remains hitherto unknown to our readers, and which, for our English readers especially, contains matter of the deepest interest.

Before we enter, however, upon this proposed review of the folk-lore itself, we must be permitted to turn, for a while, to the origin of the Icelanders, to their language, their land, and their manners, in so far as these subjects are connected with the popular superstitions.

It has been, and may yet be, a common supposition, that Iceland was not only first discovered by Norwegians, but also entirely peopled by them. Now this is by no means correct. It is not for us to decide whether or no the "Thule" whereat Pytheas of Marseilles[1] touched was Iceland, or the Hebrides, or the Shetlands, or the Faroes, or the Orkneys. Doctors have disagreed on this point, and we dare indulge in no surmise, at least upon paper. Our readers may, however, be interested in referring to a note in the early portion of Lord Dufferin's "Letters from High Latitudes," where the matter is discussed. Many later writers on geography concur in the opinion that Iceland itself is meant.[2] But there is proof of another discovery of Iceland, which will shew that it was *first* discovered from Great Britain, and not from Norway. The Irish monk Dicuil,[3] in his book, "De mensurâ orbis terræ," tells us that, towards the close of the 8th century (cca 795), the "Ultima Thule," by which *he* undoubtedly means Iceland, was visited by some British monks, who dwelt in the island from February until August. With these monks the historian himself spoke, and heard their accounts of their sojourn there. This leaves little room for doubt, that Great Britain may boast the honour of having discovered Iceland some sixty or eighty years before Norwegians ever set foot upon its soil. And this statement is founded upon no mere quicksand of supposition, but upon a pretty solid rock of written proof. We are even of opinion that the Norwegian settlement of the country must have been, to a great extent, due to rumours that got afloat of a new land, by no vast distance removed from the then highway of Scandinavian commerce,—from a line, in fact, drawn from Norway and Elsinore, over the Shetlands and Orkneys, to Scotland and the British dominions.

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[1] Strabo, Lib. IV.

[2] See, particularly, Beda Venerabilis: "*De naturâ rerum, et ratione temporum*," ch. 31.

[3] Dicuili liber de mensurâ orbis terræ, ch. vii. Edid. Walckenaer, Paris, 1807. Recherches géographiques et critiques sur le livre, "de mensurâ orbis terræ," suivies du texte restitué par A. Letronne. Paris, 1814.

We consider it not unlikely that, from the time of the above-mentioned discovery of the country, down to the beginning of the Norwegian influx (about 870), British monks must have resided in Iceland, if not constantly, certainly at times; for we have the testimony of the author of Landnamabók (the book of Icelandic discovery and settlement), Ari the Learned,[1] that when the heathen Norwegians came to the island, they found not only monastic relics, such as bells, staves, and books "written in Irish letters," but even Christian monks, whom they called "Papar," (papists, or popish men,) who seem not to have been confined to one spot, but to have had their abodes in various parts of the country. They, however, either left the land in horror of and disgust at the pagan intruders, or were expelled or otherwise got rid of by the latter.

Then, in 874, began the final settlement of the country, when Ingolfr Arnason took up his abode in Reykjavik, the present capital of the country; and henceforth Iceland became a retreat eagerly sought for by people who loved their freedom, and would defend it against the arrogance and tyranny of Harold the Fair-haired, King of Norway. But not these people only: chiefs from the British dominions,—who, satiate with strife and with a tumultuous life of blood and warfare, and undesirous that "in clamour of battle their hands might lay hold upon death," longed for a peaceful home and a quiet end to their days,—came gladly to untroubled Iceland.

---

[1] Islendinga Sögur. Copenh. 1843, pp. 23, 24.

Long before the time of the final settlement of Iceland, a remarkable current of Scandinavian nationality had been streaming unceasingly over the Atlantic, towards the Shetlands, the Orkneys, the Hebrides, Scotland, England, and Ireland. Nor, by this time, was it in the least abated; for this long current of migration had produced strong connexions, as well social as political, between the Eastern and Western nationalities. And so deeply rooted had the Scandinavian element become in England, in the time of King Athelstane (a time which fairly represents that of the settlement of Iceland), that the people of Northumberland are stated to have been Danes, either by father or by mother, and many by both.[1]

A change of this kind is, usually, long in taking place, and must have been so here, even though the steel of those old pirates, flashing with the "furor Normannorum," brought it about more speedily than a straightforward, calm, and peaceful influx of a foreign race could possibly have done.

---

[1] Egils Saga. Reykjavik, 1856, *passim:* particularly ch. 4, in fine; chs. 50—55.

After the discovery of Iceland, this current branched off northwards, and thus that island began to be peopled, partly from the *East*, or Norway, and partly from the *West*, or Great Britain.

We stated above, that the supposition, so long prevalent, that Iceland was entirely peopled from Norway, was erroneous. In support of our assertion stands that famous work of Ari the Learned, on the population and settlement of Iceland. From this book, it is evident that the settlers came no less from the British dominions, than from Norway. Some are mentioned as having come directly from Great Britain; others, concerning whom this is not stated, plainly shew by their names, that they came from the *West*, as such names could not come from Norway. Indeed, a close study of the Landnamabók will soon bring the conviction, that Iceland was peopled, about equally, from Great Britain and Norway.

Over the sea, with those Scandinavians, came their language; and it is remarkable that, although they had so long been settled in the *West*, or Great Britain, that language seems to have undergone no change whatever, at the time when Iceland began to be peopled from Britain; for no difference of language between Eastmen and Westmen, who came to settle in the country, has been recorded. We have even strong reason to believe that in England the language of the Scandinavians was perfectly well understood, as, in the beginning of the 10th century, king Athelstane comprehended and rewarded royally an Icelandic "drápa," or laudatory poem, recited to him by the poet himself, after the victory gained in Northumberland over Olaf, king of Scotland,—a poem which, to judge by such of its fragments as have come down to us, was in no way easy to understand.[1] Now, that the language should thus be able to hold its own against that of the people in this country, is a pretty strong proof that they who spoke it were by no means few in number; subservient they cannot have been at all. A further and more developed treatment of these facts, interesting as they are with reference to the early history of the English tongue, we leave to another opportunity, and turn now to the task we have set ourselves.

With their language, the Scandinavians brought with them, over the sea, their mythology, their national ideas, their superstitions, and their folk-lore. But during the stay of these people in Britain, many of their ideas must have undergone a certain change, being mixed, and, to some extent, confused with those of the country wherein they sojourned. Thus, when noble and peasant migrated hence to Iceland, their ideas mingled with those of the Norwegians who poured in shoals thither also. So, in the calm of that then peaceful island, a form of folk-lore, peculiar, full, weighty, bright and varied, arose : the Spirit of the land vivified the statue that had been cast of many precious metals in one mould, and, though the diversity of ingredients remained, and ever will remain apparent, the unity was great and complete.

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[1] Egil's Saga, ch. 55.

The settlers brought the same language into the country unchanged by both currents, that from Great Britain and that from Norway. It was the same language as the people speak yet in its original form, for its grammatical and syntactical construction has undergone, comparatively speaking, no real changes. Every farmer's boy, and every servant in the country, reads with delight, even at this day, the classical works written in that noble and musical tongue—works which are yet the Icelander's deepest and most inexhaustible source of pleasure—works which replace, to him, the theatres and dances of the South.

The immense multitude of the words, and the almost unbounded liberty the language affords of forming new and powerful combinations, rendered it early a fascinating employment for the Icelander, to tell stories in his own tongue. The agitated life of the people, their sea-rovings, and their travels in foreign lands, then added freshness, life, and originality to their spirit; and the works they have written, and the poems they were wont to recite to kings and earls abroad, during the 10th, 11th, and 12th centuries, give clear evidence that they fell short neither in wit, nor in originality, nor in power.

The strength, too, of the tongue, its depth, and fitness for poetry, musical and ponderous as it was when composed in the peculiar rythms of the classic time, and recited by a warrior as mighty in his verses as he was in his blows, made it a great favourite at foreign courts. As it was spoken in so many and different countries, it abounded in figures and ideas the most various. The mythology was rich and the poets were numerous, so that there was no lack of forcible and imaginative expressions; and the warrior-poets subdued the language to their wants as they subdued their enemies in the fight. To the poems of these men, who sang of mighty deeds and battles, of men strong in war, of kings and earls, we owe all our knowledge of the early history of Northern Europe. Their poems were the sources whence the Icelandic historians afterwards drank their fill, and whence we have the writings which have made this people and their ancient doings so well known to all the world in modern times.

We have stated above, that from East and West legendary recollections must have migrated to Iceland with the settlers, and at last found there their resting-place. In the country itself, from the very beginning, legends must have been current in numbers.

In the earliest times, they savoured of paganism alone, and took a harsh and formidable aspect; and that our readers may form some idea of the power and depth of description of the horrible in these tales, we refer them to the Eyrbyggja Saga, Grettis Saga, Sturlunga Saga, Njáls Saga, &c.

In those days, when so much was attributed to the elements, and when everything in the wide realms of nature had its mystic function, and the universe was peopled with beings immaterial, portents and omens were as common as goblins and ghosts. Great tidings of battles, or of bloodshed, were often betokened with blood-omens, in various ways.[1] But not these alone were current among the people. Dreams, visions, portents and appearances the most fanciful are repeatedly mentioned, and firmly believed as having taken place. In the olden days, these were all, more or less, of a warlike kind. Spears and arrows cleft the air and fought, without a hand to brandish or hurl them.[2] Men were seen to walk out of yawning rifts in the hills, to give tokens of the near approaching death of warriors.[3] At other times, black riders, on pale or yellow horses, swept through the firmament, foreboding war and manslaughter, and taking their course towards the place of action.[4] Heads, without bodies, sang songs of death and blood.[1] No less frequent in those times, were stories of ghosts and goblins. Evil-minded tr~~o~~alls, and black-hearted chiefs continued, after their death, to annoy those on whom they had not wrought full vengeance while alive.[2] Dead warriors sat in dismal desolation and gloomy inactivity in their cairns, where few could wrest from their hands such treasure, weapon, or gold, as had been buried with them. At other times they were seen in the open barrow, often gleaming with a wonderful light, singing songs of the life they had quitted.[3] In fact, in such various forms do these early superstitions appear, that we should fill volumes were we to enumerate and dwell upon them all. We must, therefore, beg our readers to glean, as best they can, from our sketch, an idea of the superstitional character of early Iceland.

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[1] See (out of many instances), Njála. Copenh. 1772, ch. cxxviii., p. 197 ; ch. clvii., p. 272 ; ch. clviii., pp. 275—279. Dasent : Burnt Njál, II., ch. cxxvi., p. 167 ; ch. clv., pp. 330—332 ; ch. clvi., 338, ff. Eyrbyggja-Saga. Leipzig, 1864, ch. li., pp. 94, 95.

[2] Njàla, ch. clvii.

[3] Ib., ch. cxxvi. Compare, for this, Dasent's Burnt Njál, II., ch. cxxiv., p. 163.

[4] Njála, ch. cxxxiv., p. 211. Dasent, II., ch. cxxxii., p. 198.

That the people of Iceland have been, from the very first settlement of the country, fanciful and imaginative in a very high degree, is, to a great extent, due to the nature of the country itself. Freeborn as the people were, and of the greatest families in East and West, they loved, beyond all else in the world, their freedom, and in thought and action used it. After they had come to dwell in a country so peculiarly adapted by nature to be the cradle of wild and strange imaginations, we need not wonder that their minds, already strongly predisposed, rapidly, and in every way enriched the folk-lore. The country, in these early days, was "covered with wood between mount and beach."[1] Its shores were surrounded by an ever restless sea, and lashed in winter by terrible storms. In some parts, the coast was flat and surf-exposed; in others, deep and placid gulfs cleft the hills, and smiled in perfect calm, while the sea without their mouths was wild with tempest.

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[1] Eyrbyggja-Saga, Leipzig, 1864, ch. xliii., p. 77.

[2] Hávarðar Saga Isfirðings, ch. ii., p. 6. Gretti's Saga. Copenh., 1845, ch. xxxv., pp. 83—86.

[3] Njála, ch. lxxix., pp. 118–19. Dasent, I., ch. lxxvii., pp. 250–51.

From the mountains to the ocean ran headlong torrents; those from the glaciers, white as milk; and those from underground springs, and emerald lakes, and melting snows beneath a July sun, as clear as the midsummer heaven. And these rivers make in the wilderness, where no stranger's foot yet has trodden, vast waterfalls, which are the pride of Iceland. The mountains are steep, and the broad and turbulent streams that leap down from gulf to gulf make the wild tracks above the precipice both dangerous and spirit-stirring.

But there were other streams which flowed down from the mountains, no less wild, and far more terrible. These were the rivers of burning lava from the volcanoes there abounding, that destroyed all in their path. Man and beast shrunk terrified back to home and lair, upon an earth that trembled, and beneath a heaven filled with dust, and gloom, and ashes,—only to be destroyed, a little later on.

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[1] Islendíngabók, ch. i., p. 4.

Yet again did other mountains hurl down another kind of stream, one of boiling water and burnt volcanic sand, that destroyed the land it flowed over, and, in the place of rich green plains and slopes, left a black and dreary wilderness, where reigns the silence and the barrenness of death, even at this day.

In some places, columns of smoke and steam rose into the air, like infernal spirits from the inmost parts of the earth, and troubled the country round them with spasms of quaking. Elsewhere, the wonder-working powers beneath the ground, hurled up, to battle with the winds, pillars of boiling water, and deep and terrible thunderings were heard in the abyss.

The mountains themselves now shew a strange assemblage of forms and hues. From the narrow valleys they rise so sheer, that one would deem them walls built by giant hands and split with the wedges of time, rather than cliffs of nature's own fashioning. Rocks rise hither and thither, wild as the clouds of an autumn storm, with grass at their feet and snow-crowns on their brows, as dreary in their spring glory, with their cold grey faces, as when shrouded in a veil of winter mist.

There too, are the mighty ice-mountains, the jökulls, which rise abruptly from plain and sea; and most terrible and sublime are these in the north-western and south-eastern districts of the country, in the so-called

Jökul-firðir (Glacier-firths in Skaptafells-sýsla). Like great Rime-giants they lie upon the desolate and lifeless land, their feet black with the sand of many storms, their heads crowned with the white hair of their countless years, and the emerald diadems of sunshine.

It may well be said that no words can tell the beautiful desolation of these majestic glaciers of Iceland; but far harder would it be to describe the view that lies before him who has once ascended to a dominant peak, and sees that rugged land and that tortured sea beneath him, in every shade of every colour, fantastically broidered in white by Rán's[1] inventive hand.

The steepness of the mountains is one of the causes that have contributed to the destruction of the greensward in the country. Every year occur many and serious landslips. In the winter, mighty masses of snow accumulate, and gather weight and force, until some passing rumour in the air, the too near beat of some strong wing, or their own gravity, hurls them down into the valleys below, javelins of destruction. In the milder seasons, the waters pierce through the soft soil, high up the slopes, or gather between rocks, and, when their strength is ripe, rush down with rock, and earth, and pebble and sand, and overwhelm all in their course, man and beast, and the things which man has built, and the fields which he has tilled.

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[1] Rán is, in Northern mythology, the queen of the sea, the wife of Ægir, the sea-god; and the name is often used for sea.

As time passed on, the track of these earthslips became covered with vegetation, and one may often find now bright little oases of grass and ferns and mountain-plants, sheltered and surrounded by the remnants of the old catastrophe. It is in such spots as these, and in the rocks which lie around them, that the elves chose their retreats, as well as the guardian-genii, or "Land-vœttir," the scaring of whom was forbidden in the earliest Icelandic laws, by this provision: "That none who sailed towards the country should approach it with gaping snouts, or open beaks,"[1] in order that the Land-vœttir, or land spirits, or guardian genii, should not be scared out of their rest. This, alone, shews how early the settlers peopled the country with beings of an elfin nature, for to the race of elves we must refer these Land-vœttir, although their functions appear sometimes to differ from those of the elves.

A striking feature in the country is the number and appearance of its lakes, which, in many instances, abound with salmon, trout, and other fish. Many travellers have had the opportunity of making themselves acquainted with some of these, such as "Thingvalla vatn," the water, or lake of Thingvellir.[2] Others have proceeded as far as Myvatn, (mosquito-water). They who have seen these, the chief lakes in the country, will agree that the wonderful wildness of their beauty might well make an imaginative people think upon the powers that have set these remarkable seals upon the work of their revolutions. None will ever look upon the lake of Thingvellir, and the terrible splendour of the country round it, without awe and admiration. An Icelandic poet has said,—

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[1] This alludes to the war-ships of earlier times, called "drekar," (dragons,) whose prow or beak was a dragon's head. See Olafs Saga, Helga, Christiania, 1853, ch. 137; Snorra Edda, ed. Havn. I., 582–3, 430–2; Heimskringla, III. 62, 1.

[2] In almost every English traveller's description of Iceland, this

> "None but God and fire
> Could produce such a glorious work of wonder."

The yawning of rifts which seem bottomless; the almost supernatural clearness and emerald tint of the water; the wild forms of lava heaped around, as if nature had furiously cast aside and shattered an unfinished work; the intensity of the solitude; the supreme majesty of the great, cold hills that crown the far horizon, make of both these lakes, pictures that no one can look on unmoved.

Thus, wherever we turn our eyes, the country shews us striking and original features, sculptured with nature's boldest and most heedless chisel. And even the heaven that lies above this land, and the seasons that are its smiles and its frowns, are here strange and unusual.

Than the cold still beauty of a winter night in

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word is spelt "Thingvalla," as if it were a nominative form. This is a Danish corruption. Thingvalla is the Icelandic genitive plural.

Iceland, when the moon is at its brightest, or the Northern Lights are up in heaven, nothing can be more sublime, save the midnight splendour of the midsummer polar sun.

The weird glory of the Northern Lights no words can describe, when the whole dome of night is filled with flying javelins of many-coloured flame, and the white mountains blush and sparkle like tongues of fire, till day changes them to ash. And the silence of these fiery arrows is at once terrible and beautiful. In the midst of the burning tumult that reigns in heaven, when one listens for the voice of thunder, for the tread of feet, for the cries of battle, and for the rush of blazing darts, there is not a sound, not a whisper; the warriors are shod with silence, and their voice, like the harmony of the spheres, is to mortal ears inaudible.

Wonderful again are the winter nights, when the moon is at its full, and the air is calm, and the snow-shrouded earth gleams and glitters in the intense white light, like the face of a corpse upon whose cheek lie the tears of many friends. The ruggedness of the hills is hidden, their river tongues are mute with ice, the sea that has cleft itself a gulf between the frowning rocks is frozen and raves no more; and so lie the dead, with the seams of age and anguish smoothed away, with the voice of pleading silenced, and with the fountains of life's tumult sealed for ever. Let him who lives in the turmoîl of some great city, be suddenly placed upon the trackless snow of an Icelandic valley, at midnight, in midwinter, beneath a full moon, and the air will surely people itself for him with fairy shapes, in which every hope, dread, and recollection of his life is embodied. Above his head will gleam the constellations, brighter than lightning, and beneath his feet will lie the winding-sheet of a dead land.

Wild and fearful there are the black and stormy nights, when the moon is waning. Land, and sea, and sky are then in full uproar; the snow is hurled hither and thither; the waves foam; and sea-monsters and evil spirits fly about, shelterless, seeking to do harm to man and beast. The air is filled with strange and terrible sounds, and storm-lights and corpse-candles flit hither and thither, and fix upon the heads of luckless travellers who are abroad in the tempest.[1]

But, wonderful and impressive as this is, the aspect of the midnight sun is still more so. There is a ghostliness in its splendour, and a dreaminess about the landscape and sea it shines upon, that no words can do justice to. The effect it produces upon those who see it for the first time, is one of absolute pain. Nevertheless, it is impossible to detail the respects in which it differs from the sun at noon: it is impossible to sift the reasons of its oppressive and night-mare effect. It may easily be understood that in a land such as this Iceland, where the mind was worked upon in so many ways, the susceptible imagination of the settlers and of their descendants soon peopled rock and river, sea and air, with mystic or superstitional beings. In early times, when the laws of nature were unknown, the people naturally personified the powers of earth and heaven, and these personifications rapidly took form, bulk, and solidity, had homes allotted to them, and thenceforth belonged to the country. Stories of these, of their dwellings, sayings and doings, became current, therefore, very shortly after the settlement of the country. And so great has been the multitude of these stories, that it would be hard now to find a single farm, in or in the neighbourhood of which there is not some stone, rift, dip, stream or hillock that bears a name savouring of the old mystic beings. All such bear testimony to the vivid imagination of the people, who have drawn the most fanciful and poetical tales from the commonest objects.

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[1] Iceland being, in places, extremely marshy, gives birth to many of these phosphoric appearances, particularly in troubled weather. They are forms of the "Will-o'-the-wisp." Where there is *animal* putrefaction, these lights are often wonderfully vivid. The storm-lights are doubtless electric.

We have now shewn, we believe, that the country itself was the most natural father of that folk-lore to which the brains of the people gave birth. The multitude of the tales there existing, putting any arguments of our own aside, would be proof sufficient of the amazing fertility of the Icelandic spirit; and, even putting these aside, the names of mountains, farms, rivers, rocks, &c., would shew clearly enough the imprint of elfin and goblin superstition. It would seem, from these names, that, from the earliest settlement of the country, elves, and other less friendly beings, such as trolls, have been man's close neighbours. And this adds, not a little, to the interest of the topography of the country.

We have already stated that, in the remotest times, the Icelandic superstition was strongly imbued with the then prevailing warlike spirit, and wore a harsher and more demoniacal character than later on. Stories of elves were but scarce in those days, whereas those of goblins and ghosts were abundant. Yet it cannot be doubted that elves formed, at any rate, some part of the superstition. In the stories, or sagas, however, the authors have little inducement to introduce elves, as these beings have never had much to do with warfare, and could scarcely hold a place in the lives of the heroes. It is also evident that the elves must have belonged to the race of the Land-vœttir, and as such were peaceful, faint-hearted, defenceless and inoffensive beings, who could, nevertheless, do harm if ill-treated, we have a clue to the law-provision quoted above. The general topics of story were, therefore, in the beginning, goblins, trolls, and ghosts, warfare, sea-roving, and deeds of daring and heroism,—the first themes of Icelandic saga-telling.

That the folk-lore has grown up to its present bulk, of which our selection, and even Mr. Arnason's whole collection, give but a small idea, is, to a great extent, due to the manners of the people, apart from their strong imagination. At all times, story-telling has been a favourite occupation of the people. Not only did they, in former days, recite tales in their quiet homes, by their own fire-sides, but they were ready to do so at banquets and drinking-feasts, at any great assemblies, and at the Thing or Diet. To tell a story well was considered a great accomplishment, but to tell it vividly and truthfully was looked upon as the highest quality of a saga-teller.[1] This art of telling stories soon became a national custom, and whosoever was accomplished in it was always sure to gather round him a rapt and attentive crowd, whether at home or abroad. The quiet life of the people in after days contributed not a little to turn their minds to this fanciful employment, and it is the long winter nights that have been subsequently the hot-beds of legendary lore. Very strange and charming is the effect of an Iceland home at night, with the family "sitting in the dusk," (sitjandi í rökkrinu), while a clever woman (for women have always, in Iceland, been excellent saga-tellers, as the best historical works confess,)[2] recites to the rest some goblin or elfin story, with a wonderful air of conviction, and with a simplicity and clearness of language which render her description lifelike. The sentiments of the actors in the tale are left, for the most part, to the listener to fill in, but the framework of place and incident is sketched with a minuteness that is positively startling. Thus the imagination of every one is roused and kept at pitch, and the delight of the circle grouped round the teller, especially that of children, amounts often to a kind of ecstasy. The spokesmanship is by no means confined to women only, nor to grown-up people exclusively; even the young folk have a voice in the assembly that is collected to feast upon the supernatural, always provided, of course, that they have some new thing to tell. Naturally, the elders have, by far, the advantage, in point of language.

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[1] See *e.g.* Njála.

[2] Out of numerous examples, we will mention that the author of the Islendíngabók—libellus Islandorum—Ari the Learned, was indebted for much of his excellent work to "Þoríðr Snorradóttir goða er bæði var margspök ok óljúgfróð,"—Thoridr, the daughter of priest Snorri, who was both many-wise and deep in unlying lo~~v~~re, (*i. e.*, historical knowledge unfraught with falsehood).

In this way, Icelandic folk-lore has trodden and grown through centuries, down to our days.

Much lore was preserved also in the songs and ballads that, in every age, were current. That these were by no means scant, may be judged from the immense quantity of manuscripts still extant in many libraries, (particularly at Copenhagen,) filled with these ballads. When the traditions of a people are so fortunate as to get a robe of rhymes, they are far better and more surely protected from the corrosive winds of time than those that walk from generation to generation in the nakedness of their prose. Should any of our readers take interest in these ballads of Iceland, we must refer them to the selection of Islenzk Fornkvæðir, made by our learned friend, the present president of the

Icelandic Literary Society, Jón Sigurdsson, and Professor S. Grundtvig, in Copenhagen; this is far from being a complete collection of all the ballads yet in existence, being, in fact, merely a collection of specimens of Icelandic legendary and ballad poetry from various periods.

Turning to the Icelandic folk-lore, as we have it before us in the collection of National Tales by Arnason, the first thing that strikes us is the vast bulk of the stories, which fill no less than 1347 pages of close print, in large octavo. An introduction is prefixed to the work, written by the able and learned Icelander, Gudbrandr Vigfússon, extracts from which we have given in the preface to our First Series of these Legends. To the second volume are added an epilogue, and a list of those who have contributed stories to the work, by the great Icelandic scholar, Dr. Konrad Maurer, Professor at the University of Munich.

Mr. Arnason has divided his collection into stories of ten classes:

1. Mythic Stories.
2. Goblin Stories.
3. Stories of Witchcraft.
4. Stories of Natural Phenomena.
5. Legends (in the closer sense).
6. Historical Legends.
7. Stories of Outlaws.
8. Tales.

9. Comic Stories.
10. Superstitions.[1]

We find that, under the first, or mythological series, are grouped together stories of elves, water-monsters, and trolls. All these beings appear in a quite peculiar form of their own, evidently original, and purely Icelandic. There are no stories current in Iceland which we could call modernized myths of the gods or other beings who once formed the mythic cyclus of the North. The old gods have, long since, entirely ceased to occupy the fancy of the people; and their names only are still found in those of certain herbs, in that of one bird, and in a good number of personal names. Even the names of the days have, owing to the over-zealous energy of the first bishop of Hólar, Jón Ogmundsson (1106—1121), gradually lost their heathen derivation: so that now, the days that formerly were dedicated to Týr (Týsdagr, Tuesday); Óðinn (Óðinsdagr, Odin's-Wodan's-Wednesday); Thór (Þórsdagr, Thursday,)[2] are now called Þriðji dagr (Third day); Miðvikudagr (Midweekday); and Föstudagr (Fast day). We may, therefore, safely say that of the old mythic traditions there remain but small traces at the present day. In Iceland, the Northern mythology ceased to be traditional at all, after the compilation of the works of Sœmundr Frodi (the Learned), and Snorri Sturluson,—

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[1] The same division as that of K. Maurer, in his admirable work Islandische Volks-Sagen der Gegenwart. Leipzig, 1860.

[2] See Jóns Saga Helga hin elzta. Biskupa Sögur, I., pp. 165 and 237.

the Eddas. In these works the mythology was to be found well-nigh in full; they were read, they were copied, and actually learned by heart, by peasant and by priest. All old traditions that were not to be found in the Eddas were contained in the Sagas, which were equally sought for, read, copied, and learnt by heart. The consequence was, that these no longer occupied the inventive mind of this fanciful people; they needed *nihil in mente*, having *totum in sacco*. The songs of the older Edda, and the classic description of the deeds of the heathen gods contained in the younger, together with all the poetical insertions in the Sagas, and their mythical allusions, were, in themselves, enough to replace in after times the old traditions. Thus the gods themselves passed out of the folk-lore; their deeds were written on parchment, and existed orally no more.

But there remained the elves, the water-spirits, the trolls, and the dwarfs, all of whom have their place assigned to them in the Northern mythology,—with all of these beings, the folk-lore has, naturally, much to do. Their existence was bound to the country, and, as we may say, its physical features and peculiarities are the runes whence the people's imagination has deciphered many a fantastic tale about them. Elves in hill and stone; monsters in sea, lake, and river; trolls in sheer cliffs, and caves, and abysses,—all these beings are inseparable, in thought, from the places they were wont to haunt. The scenes of the stories exist for ever, but the tone of every legend is influenced by the bent of the narrator's mind, by his education, and by the social state of his time. This influence, though applying to legendary lore in general, applies particularly to tales of goblins, sorcery and witchcraft, of which we shall have to say more hereafter.

The great number of proper names in Iceland, connected with elves, shews clearly how common the belief in them has once been. These beings are differently denominated: álfar, álfafólk, álfakyn, álfkona, *i.e.*, elves, elf-folk, elfkin or kind, elf-woman. They are also called huldufólk, huldumadr, huldukona, *i. e.*, hid-folk, hid-man, hid-woman, which latter names betokened their power of remaining invisible to human beings. One name yet is applied to them, describing them as mild and propitious,—Ljúflíngur—"Lovelings."[1]

Mr. Arnason has not classed the elves themselves into any subdivisions or groups, but such classification is made, even in the 17th century, by the learned but eccentric and superstitious Jón Gudmundsson, called the "Learned," "toothsmith," and "painter;" (born 1574, died 1650).[2] He has divided elves into three groups: the first, that of elves living in, or under the earth; the second, that of elves that inhabit the sea, whom he called, "marmennlar,"—mermen, and mermaids; and the third, that of elves that dwell in rocks and hills. We will quote one of his stories concerning the sea-elves.

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[1] Isl. Þjóðs., I., p. 28. The race of Ljúflíngar, as well as the word itself, is evidently near akin to the Eddaic Lofarr (the *lovely* race).

[2] Concerning Jón, see Historia literaria Islandiæ; Havniæ et Lipsiæ, 1786, pp. 82, 139, 140, 168.—Historia Ecclesiastica Islandiæ, by Finnus Jonœus (1772—1778), II., p. 368; III., pp. 518, 519; 590—593.—Espolin. J. Arbœkr Islands. Copenh. 1827—1855.—VI., pp. 49, 65, 84, 85, 122; VII., p. 22.

A man once went to church on Christmas-day, late in the evening, and his way happened to lie along the sea-shore. In a cave in the rocks above him, he heard a great noise of dancing and merry-making, and, at the same time, saw that there lay on the shore numerous seal-skins. He took the smallest of these, and put it between his upper and under clothes. At the same time the elves rushed forth, with a great din, and each seized upon his own seal-skin, and, donning it, leapt into the sea. One girl remained behind, and tried to snatch her seal-skin from the man who had put it on, but unsuccessfully. He caught hold of her, and took her home, and married her, but she never cherished true love for him. Thus they lived together, for two years, and had two children, a son and a daughter. Now, all this time, a seal was seen, swimming along the coast, in front of their home; this seal was the unelfed woman's elf-husband. One day, when the man was not at home, the woman discovered her seal-skin, donned it, vanished, and was seen no more.[1]

The elves that dwelt in rocks and hills were, says Jón, called "Ljúflíngar" (Lovelings). These did not inhabit the lava, which was rather the abode of evil Land-vœttir and ghosts, who mischievously blinded human beings.[2]

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[1] See Isl. Þjóðs., XII.

[2] Ibid., I., p. 28.

Although the elves are not thus classed by Arnason, they yet appear to be inhabitants of both elements, earth and water, and underground they seem to lead a gay and royal life.[1] Arnason maintains that, in Iceland, both land-elves and water-beings are popularly classed together, and in his collection there appears indeed a story, decidedly in favour of this opinion;[2] besides the tale we have taken into our selection, of the Merman.[3]

The story we have just quoted from Jón the Learned is also a proof in favour of this. To class the trolls with the elves, as a mythic group, is also natural, for, in Northern mythology, no supernatural beings act a greater part than trolls and giants, who constantly troubled Thor. But of these more hereafter.

Concerning the habitations of the elves, Arnason even goes so far as to assert that they have been believed to dwell in the air. This, far from being wonderful, is even probable, according to the later account given of them in the Genesis of the Elves; but, on the other hand, no proof of this assertion can be drawn from the stories themselves. It appears, however, that they could travel as easily through the air as on land, by the aid of a magic bridle, cloth, or horse.[4]

When describing the appearance of the elves, Mr. Arnason tells us that they were, in form and features, exactly like human beings. But he adds a quotation from the above-mentioned Jón the Learned, which he strongly discountenances, as being contrary to all ideas about these beings contained in Icelandic folk-lore. We give this quotation, for curiosity's sake :—

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[1] See the Story of Hildur, Queen of the Elves.—Isl. Þjóðs, p. 110.—Icelandic Legends, First Series.

[2] See Isl. Þjóðs, I., pp. 118, 119.

[3] See Icelandic Legends, First Series.

[4] Ibid.; *passim.*

> "They have flesh, and blood, and skin,
> Hearing, and the speaking art;
> Nought but soul wants elfin kin,
> That is their inferior part."

There was evidently some flaw in the poet's power of rhyme (if we look at the Icelandic), which made him add the latter half of the strophe, for the elves are, according to the records of the folk-lore, even wiser than men. (See the story of the Fisherman of Götur, among others). Yet it is curious that the word elf is used in Iceland, in daily talk, as an opprobrious term, signifying a fool. But this change in the meaning of the word has, we suppose, taken its origin from the belief that children who had been charmed by elves (see pp. lxii—lxiv.) became infatuated and silly. In the appearances of elves there are, however, some trifling differences from those of men. They have, as Jón the Painter assures us, no division between the nostrils; others say that they have only one nostril, and that the depression which runs, in men, from the cartilage of the nose to the upper lip, is, in elves, an elevation.[1]

We will give the reader a curious account of the Icelandic elves, written by a farmer in the West-island, by name Olafr from Purk-isle, 1845, extracted by Arnason from the farmer's MS., entitled: "Writ about Hid-folk, or Elves, for Instruction, and Knowledge of the Realm of Nature." "I will in a few words (says our peasant) tell my thoughts and opinion of hid-folk, or elves, and somewhat of my own sight, (not to say touch), and by tellings confirm and give information, according to what I know to be truest, and I have heard spoken thereof, by trustworthy people. It is my thinking, that the bodies of hid-folk are of more delicate construction than ours; that their flesh is soft and mild to the touch, whereas their bones are smaller than ours."[1]

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[1] Isl. Þjóðs, XIII.

These are the peculiarities of elves, apart from men, as far as their bodies are regarded. In most other respects, they closely resemble human beings. They are, however, believed to be more long-lived than men. They are fond of good eating and drinking; they have revels and feasts, and dancing, and music in their brightly lighted abodes, which are often adorned with royal splendour. At Christmas-time, and at the new year, they change their dwellings, those being their moving days. They employ themselves as men do; they have their live stock of sheep and cattle, which are always better, and yield more milk, and wool, and flesh than ours. Their household concerns are arranged on the same system as those of men; churning is often heard in their rocks, when men pass by them, as well as the sound of the spinning-wheel. They knit, they cut their grass, and occupy themselves with haymaking, as other good farmers do. They go out fishing to sea, as well as on inland waters, as many folk have stated, who have heard the splash of their oars, and the murmurs of voices whose words could not be distinguished; even boats have been seen sailing, or launched, or hauled ashore. But all such appearances vanish again in an instant. A particularly good sign of prosperous trout-fishing is the sound of elfin talk on fishing lakes, early in the spring; the holes in the ice on frozen lakes in winter, are called elf-holes, ("álfa vakir").

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[1] A story in Arnason's collection, which would seem to carry out this idea, is told of a hid-woman, who, being married to a man, could not endure the benediction in church, and vanished into foam on the floor, when she could not escape in time: "and it was people's saying, that her body was, as it were, jelly-like or froth-like to the touch."

The mythological difference between the elves denoted by the Edda, "Ljósalfar" (light-elves), and "Dökk-alfar" (black-elves), does not appear in the modern elf-lore of Iceland. Arnason only hints at the belief that some elves were good, and others bad; the good were such as had accepted the Christian religion, and were tenacious of their faith, and had churches, priests, and rites, as we have.[1] Dr. Maurer, in his travels in Iceland, was even shewn an elf-churchyard,[2] where people hear sometimes a burial going on, especially in winter, when the earth is frozen and must be broken with a pickaxe. To hear the sound of bells in rocks, and the singing of hymns, is quite a usual thing.

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[1] This is corroborated by the story of Ljúflínga,—Arni, I., pp. 94–100.

[2] Islandische Volkssagen der Gegenwart, Leipzig, 1860, p, 4.

As to the administration of their common affairs, the elves seem to decide matters of importance, as the Icelanders formerly did, at Things, or meetings of their representatives. These meetings they hold on sheer, column-shaped rocks, separated on all sides from the rocks around. One such spot is even shewn now-a-days in the country, and more would probably be found if search were made for them.

It appears also, from older records, that the elf-population of Iceland was under the sway of two kings, who were, however, only viceroys to his supreme majesty the king of the elves in Norway. Every other year, each king went, in turn, to Norway, with his suite, in order to lay before the High-king a report of the state of affairs in Iceland.[1] Stories countenancing this assertion are still current in the country, as the reader will see from that of "Hildr, Queen of the Elves."[2]

In their converse with men the elves exhibit one particularly striking feature, namely, that they cannot, unless they will it, be seen by human eyes. On this and other accounts, they can, if evil-minded, do much harm to men as well as much good if well-disposed. The heathen or evil elves are always bent upon doing mischief to men who are their opponents, while the good or Christian elves try to frustrate the efforts of the others; and as the power of the bad elves is inferior, the Christian community generally succeed in helping mankind. It is, therefore, no bad policy, to stand on a friendly footing with the good elves, as they have both the will and the power to reward services, and that in a right noble and generous way. But, if they are abused, teased, injured, or disregarded, their vengeance falls heavily, and lasts until the insult be made good again. Woe to him who continues to be their enemy,—he is a ruined man.[1] In all stories of them they appear to be of an earnest temper, and nothing can they bear less than jokes, or giddy and flighty behaviour, particularly where any slight is cast upon themselves, or foolish and insulting pranks are wilfully performed in the neighbourhood of their abodes.[2] This is, however, not the case, if he who acts thus is unaware that an elf is at hand; to such ignorance the elf pays due regard.

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[1] Hist. Eccl. Isl., 368, 369.

[2] Icelandic Legends, First Series.

If one pass a rock or hill in a courteous and gentle way, the elf feels flattered, and, most likely, rewards one's courtesy in an unlooked-for way.

When elves are in need of human help, and obtain the aid they require, a rich and handsome reward is certain.[3] But if the service be not rendered, and one's intercourse with elves be indiscreetly used in the presence of others, these beings will either spit upon one's eyes[1] (in which case one becomes second-sighted); or breathe upon them[2] (when one sees no more what other folk commonly see); or thrust their fingers into them,[3] and deprive one of sight for ever. It does not always happen, however, that a service from the man's side precedes the gift from the elves. They sometimes lavish their kindness upon men who have never, in the least degree, deserved it. This is particularly the case when something ails one, or one is distressed in some way or other.[4] If elves be disappointed or deceived by those they aid, vengeance is sure to follow, and to be felt right well. When elves do harm, it is, as we have said, generally because they have been teased or insulted; nevertheless, a cow, sheep, or horse may be sometimes found killed by them, without any reason being assignable.[5] In cases like that of Túngustapi, the cause is well enough known; but in another tale (which we quote) the cause seems to be rather a trifling one compared with the terrible vengeance:—

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[1] See Legends of Iceland, "Old Beggar;" "Túngustapi." And Isl. Þjóðs,—the Story of Alfa Arni, I., pp. 93—100.

[2] See the Story of "Old Beggar," in Legends of Iceland, 1st Series.

[3] "Fisherman of Götur," Legends of Iceland; and many others.

A man stored up for himself provisions in a certain pen, far from his farm, where he was wont to sleep in foul weather, instead of running the risk of finding out the farm-house. Once, his provisions seemed to him to bear the marks of mice-teeth, and he, wondering how it came to pass that mice could be in such a place, told the matter when he came home. But, in the night, an elf-woman, dressed in blue, came to him, with wrathful looks, saying: "Thou hast done evil in telling so trifling a thing, as that my children gnawed a little from thy provisions; it made no difference to thee; thou shalt pay for that thou hast done."

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[1] Islensk. Þjóðs., I., p. 15.

[2] Ibid., I., p. 17.

[3] Ibid., p. 19.

[4] See "Grimsborg," Legends of Iceland, 1st Series.

[5] Isl. Þjóðs., I., 31.

Soon after this, the man returned to his sheep. He was wanted at the farm in the night, and appeared to his love, in a dream, all covered with blood, and terribly bruised and squeezed, and said to her: "Thus have I been dealt with, but to see how your gold-head (an ewe so named) was treated, that was worse."

Due search being made, the man and the ewe were found, frightfully bruised and torn, beneath the sheer cliffs where elves had their abode; doubtless by the mother of the children who had nibbled his provisions.[1]

One strange weakness in the character of the elf-women is their propensity to steal or change human children. They go to the cradles of young babies, and take with them their husbands, eighty years old, whom they knock, and kick, and squeeze until they are small enough to get into the cradle,[2] whereupon the change takes place. It is, therefore, a very dangerous thing, to leave a child alone in the cradle, save one put the mark of the cross at least over or upon him;[1] but the best plan is to place it both over and under the infant.

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[1] See Hjúin á Aðabæli. Isl. Þjóðs., I., 39.

[2] Ibid., p. 44 ("Barnsvaggan á minni Þverá").

Another plan, likewise, is to leave with the child a Bible, or a book of hymns, or some other religious work, which will effectually prevent any evil being or changeling from approaching the cradle.

As the cradle-child they leave behind is, in reality, nothing but an old man, toothless and hairless, the changeling will never cut teeth, nor will his hair grow. The finest children are the most sought for, and the most hideous oldling is put in their place. The temper of the changeling is unchangeable; he is always ill-humoured and naughty, and can be satisfied by no possible means. The only way to get rid of such an one is to flog him so thoroughly that his cries may reach to the ears of his elfin consort or relative, who then will be sure to return the stolen child and rescue her own oldling from his torments.[2]

Elves try in another way also to change children, namely, by charms. When human children happen to be left alone, in or out of doors in a farm, elf-women will often, putting on both form and dress of their mother, or some one whom they love, approach them in order to lure them away from home. The faster the false mother runs, the faster the poor child will follow her, stretching forth its hands towards her, crying:

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[1] Ibid., p. 44 ("Tökum á, tökun á").

[2] Ibid., p. 41. Leg. of Icel.—"The Father of Eighteen Elves."

"Take me, take me!" These charmed children run always at a preternatural speed after the elfin-enticer; and when they are missed before they have yet got out of sight, it requires an almost more than human power to overtake them, and not the less so to bring them back to reason. Some have been lost completely, and have passed for good into the invisible world of the elves. In the original collection of legends several of these charming-attempts are recorded.

For Hid-men and Hid-women to fall in love with human beings is a very common thing. If their love be not regarded, they well know how to devise a due vengeance, which they sometimes wreak under the mask of a loving kiss or warm embrace. Stories, such as "Katla's Dream," and the following, in our Legends of Iceland, illustrate this branch of the intercourse between elves and mankind. There is one story, which in this respect is particularly interesting, in Arnason's Collection,—that of "Elf-Arni," which illustrates well the liberality, piety, and fatherly love of an elfin priest on the one side, and, on the other, the deep and restless intensity of his daughter's love for Arni, and the bitter vengeance she took upon him when he would not answer her love. We have left it out of our collection, in spite of its great interest, as it lacked climax and was too broadly narrated.[1]

The fondness shewn by elves for banquetting in human abodes on Christmas-eve and New Year's-eve is remarkable. They come into the empty houses, when the people are all at church, and make themselves perfectly at home, laying the tables, and spreading them with choice dishes and rare wines, and every kind of luxurious delicacy. All the table service, flagons, porringers, platters and drinking horns, even to the cloth itself, are of gold and silver. The feasts are noisy ones, for when the revellers have finished eating and drinking, they dance and riot wildly. If they find any living being belonging to the house, they dash it and tear it to death, be it man or beast. These visits, therefore, were formerly held in great dread by the inmates. On this account, the mistress of the house was wont to place lights in every part of the house, so that no nook or corner should give a dark shelter to the elves. When this was done, she went, herself, throughout the house, repeating the words: "Come, those who like to come; go, those who like to go, to no harm for me or mine!"

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[1] Isl. Þjóðs., I., 93—100.

While the elves danced in the houses, one or more of their number stayed outside, keeping watch for the dawn of day, for they must by all means be off before daylight overtook them. We refer our readers, for illustration of this, to "Hildur, Queen of the Elves," and the "Manservant and Water-elves," in our First Series of Legends.

In the original collection Arnason has devoted 130 pages to stories of elves. Of these, we believe we have taken up the best into our first volume. It is true that they are all more or less interesting for students of folk-lore and popular fancy, yet it was clear to us, taking into consideration the general class of readers for whom our book was intended, that we could only adopt, comparatively speaking, a few of these tales.

Leaving the elves, we come into the realm of the god Œgir (Oceanus) and Rán his wife, the mighty rulers of the waters.

The folk-lore has peopled the lakes, and rivers, and sea, not only with elves, but with mermaids and various other monsters. The god Loki changed himself in days of yore into a salmon;[1] the dwarf Andvari haunted the water beneath Andara-foss (the waterfall of Andvari) under the form of a pike, and Otter his brother used to catch salmon there.[2]

This shews clearly that water-monsters, or water-spirits, are rightly classed among the Mythological Tales.

These water-beings Arnason has divided into mermen, Nykrs, or water-horses, and the real water-monsters.

In the first class there are two distinct kinds of beings: Margýgr, Hafgýgr ("mer-troll,"), Haffrú, ("sea-maid") or Mey-fiskr ("maiden-fish"), are the names applied to the first kind. The second consists of the mermen, mermennill (classed by Jón the Learned among the elves).

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[1] Snorra Edda, Rvík., 1848, pp. 29, 40. Sœm. Edd., Möbius, 1859, p. 57.

[2] Sœm. Edd. Möb., p. 128.

The mer-troll or sea-troll is said to have the form of a woman down to the waist, whence she ends in a fish's body and tail. Her hair is yellow. She is fond of looking after young men, and if they happen to sit sluggish, drowsy, or sleeping at their fishing-line, she hauls them over the edge of the boat, down into the deep. But singing or reciting of sacred hymns is a fine preventive against her attempts.

The merman differs from the first in that he never appears on the surface of the sea, except when he is caught and hauled up. When these beings have been caught they can easily breathe the air, different as it is from their own element; but they fall home-sick, are few-spoken, and pay little attention to men, save that they constantly pray to be taken back to the same place in the sea whence they were caught. Of their life we know but very little, save that they have excellent cows, which are easily distinguished by their being of a sea-grey colour, and having a bladder between the nostrils. If this bladder be broken the cow becomes perfectly tame; otherwise it is wild and unmanageable. They are the best of milch-cows, and happy is he who catches one to mend the breed of his own herd.

As an illustration of the mermen's skill in arts, we may mention the *millepora polymorpha*, or "mermen's workmanship." These mermen are mentioned even in the Landnamabók, and in the Saga of Halfr and Halfsrekkar, which shew that they were known pretty early.[1] Of this kind of being the Story of the Merman, in the First Series of Legends, gives a good illustration.

The Nykr or Vatna-hestur, river-sprite or water-horse (sometimes called also Kumbur and Nennir), is so named from its peculiar resemblance to a horse. There are very few lakes in Iceland where this horse has not been seen. His colour is generally grey; exceptionally, it is black; all his hoofs and hoof-locks are turned the wrong way. He is able, like the god Loki, to change instantly into another form, and again to assume his own. When a vast ice-cover over lake or sea bursts in winter, loud and thunderous sounds of splitting are heard, and these are said to be the neighing of the water-horse. Not unlike the elves, the water-horse seeks to multiply his race among common earthly races, although, in truth, he is but little out of his own element, where chiefly he breeds. But it is curious that all horses of this mixed breed, whether ridden or loaded, will always try to plunge down into the water as soon as it touches their girths. Their great object is to allure people to them, particularly young shepherd-girls, and make them mount them. Then they at once run off, and plunge into the water with their prey. With this end in view the Nykr does not generally move far from the water; he remains upon the bank, when he is in the humour for catching people, and wears a sleek, tame, and well-conditioned look that is often irresistible to his victims. Stories exist, and indeed, a belief, if we mistake not, to the effect that whosoever sits on this creature's back is fixed to it and unable to get off. There is one remedy, however, against the mischievousness of this horse, which is so dangerous and so difficult to escape on account of his deceitfully friendly and fascinating appearance; it is, to call out his own name or the word "andskoti" (fiend); on hearing this he lets one free, and rushes off into the water. Icelanders do well to remember, therefore, when they see a grey horse, that there is every possibility of its being a Nykr. In some cases, the Nykr seems to have a great interest for cows; for when the inhabitants of Grímsey (who were wont to be without cattle), have brought out to them a cow from the mainland it has sometimes happened that the Nykr has neighed so effectively that the cow has gone mad and galloped off into the sea. This has also partly been the reason why the isle-dwellers have not ventured, until of late years, to keep cows in Grímsey, as Jón Arnason says. When some folk, who have known more of hidden lore than others, have managed to catch a Nykr, he has proved far stronger than any other horses, but, at the same time, most malicious and unmanageable, and has usually contrived, after a short while, to get away to his old haunts.

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[1] Landnama, 1843, II., 5, pp. 76, 77. Fornaldar Sögur, II., pp. 31—33.

Besides the Nykr, there are other water-monsters which rise from seas and lakes to do harm to human beings. Sea-monsters (Sjó-skrímsli), are the most spoken of, and all over the country are stories current that tell of this creature's malice and devilish thirst for human blood. In some places these beings appear in a man's shape, but with crescent-formed feet; in others, they assume the appearance of different beasts, particularly that of horses without tails. Then, again, they take the form of a rolling wheel. Sometimes they seem to be covered all over with mussel-shells, which rattle awfully when they walk or run. At times they drive folk nearly mad by their piercing screams, which it is only for strong nerves and iron constitutions to bear. They cannot be killed by a leaden bullet, for their shell coat of mail and their demon nature resist any such shot; but he who meets them is lucky if he have a silver button or coin at hand to thrust into his gun; for no monster, however fiendish, can withstand a silver shot.

The water-monsters (those from fresh or glacier water) are sometimes called water-fiends, and appear in a great variety of forms, but they are seldom seen above the surface, save for a very short time, and then generally as flat-fish or scates, and sometimes even as a boat turned bottom upwards.

We have developed this subject here, more than

Arnason's book would give any warrant for, but we do so from our own observations in the country itself, and from stories that are told there, in an almost incredible number, of these monsters. To stories of these water-sprites and monsters Arnason has allotted a comparatively small space in his collection, pp. 131—141.

Leaving the water-beings, we come to the last group of the mythic tales, that of the Trolls.

Any one who is in the least acquainted with Northern mythology knows what an important part giants and trolls act, not only in the creation of the world, but in their opposition to humanity and to the Deity. The Æsir have no more deadly foe than the giants, and Thor is constantly in Eastern-ways on warfare against them. The whole saga-literature of Iceland abounds with tales of them, from the earliest records down to the latest. The folk-lore has, from the earliest Eddaic songs to the present day, found them a favourite topic.

In the mythic times they represent corruption, and all that is a horror to civilization and enlightened minds; and the warfare that earlier was waged between gods and giants is continued in the folk-lore on well-nigh the same system as that of old. The Icelandic word tröll (troll) signifies, in a narrower sense, giants; in the wider, it is used to denote any beings that combine preterhuman strength with demoniac malice. Thus the word can be applied to ghosts and goblins, and is even sometimes used of sorcerers. Other names for trolls are as follows: bergbúar (rock-dwellers); jötnar, þussar, risar (giants); Skessur, flögd, gýgjur (ogres, ogresses). The Icelandic folk-lore agrees perfectly with the mythology in its description of the trolls. They are always greater and stronger than men; they are stupid and unintellectual, obeying the dictates of their trollish sensuality and fiendish temper, and relying implicitly on their own might; they know nothing of self-control or regard for consequences; they are as cruel as they are greedy, and appear, in many instances, as cannibals. Generally, they are deformed even to a hideous degree, the human shape, however, always prevailing. They dwell, for the most part, in rocks and mountain-caverns, and feed upon the fish which they catch, and upon wild animals, and sometimes upon domesticated ones, and upon human flesh when they get the chance. In their intercourse with men they are almost always excessively cruel and mischievous, and take manifold vengeance if they find that they have been slighted or insulted. On the other hand, however, they can be generous and thankful, and reward well such kindnesses as they have received from men; they are as true as gold, and sometimes do men kind services, of their own accord. Hence, a high degree of fidelity is called "troll's-trust" or "troll's-faith." It is also a proverbial saying that "Trolls are best to trust;" and, "Seldom break trolls their guerdon."[1] Whosoever is fortunate enough to take trolls in a friendly way, or to shew them some service, or otherwise to come into their favour, is, without exception, a lucky man for the rest of his life. In many instances trolls have fallen in love with some human being. Sometimes they appear to know things that no man has knowledge of; as the future fate of men, and the whereabouts of rare and precious objects; and they seem to have a clear view of the past and of the future, and, in fact, of all that is hidden in gloom from human understanding. But they are void of reasoning powers, and their clumsiness of calculation leads them into many a trap, as more than one tale in this present series will shew.

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[1] See the wise saying of a troll, page 648.

Occasionally a troll has taken the red autumnal moon, rising above the hills, for a golden cake, and, climbing to some high peak, has been dashed in pieces in his wild and futile endeavours to grasp the delusive treasure.

Nothing is more hateful to them than the enlightenment which accompanies and follows Christianity; they have, in various ways, tried to hinder the introduction of that faith into Iceland, but have been worsted in all their attempts. It seems that trolls like best a cloudy sky and gloomy weather, and that the aspect of nature pleases them best which imitates most closely the shadow that lies in their own souls,—a dreary, hopeless, horizonless waste of grey. Hence, perhaps, the meaning of a very common Icelandic saying, addressed to persons when they gaze vacantly abroad: "You gaze like a troll on serenity, or like a troll on the heavens." The brightness of a cloudless sky strikes hate into the black hearts of these bitterest foes of Christ and Christianity, and despair films the eyes that gaze upon a calm they cannot disturb, and upon a glory they cannot eclipse.

If trolls lived on, or near the spot where a church was to be built, they became aware, as soon as the building was proposed, of a bright and burning light which drove them wild when they looked towards it, and which forced them to quit the place. The sound of church-bells is what they loathe and dread the most, and they would sink into the earth to avoid the hated chiming. Any one who is hard put to it by a troll, has, therefore, only to ring the church-bells in order to rid himself of his pursuer. These beings try to drive harmless priests mad in the middle of their sermons, and make such attempts particularly at Yule-tide or New-year, for then trolls, like men, must have an unusual feast. Their spells, wrought through the church-window over the pulpit, create in the priest an insane desire to get rid of his entrails. A story illustrating this most distressing form of mania is the one about the troll in Mjóifjördur.[1]

One particular branch or family of trolls cannot endure the daylight, but sallies forth at night and passes the day in gloomy caverns. In no other way are these trolls different from the rest of their race. They are called night-trolls; if, in their wanderings, they be overtaken by the day, they can move no further, but are changed to stone on the spot, and in many places in Iceland are shewn rocks that represent these petrified trolls; these rocks are called "Karl," and "Kerling" ("old man," and "old woman"). These night-trolls are either insatiable cannibals, or perfectly harmless; the former seem to typify the dangers of the night, and the latter its calm and inactivity. In the "Tales," our selection gives even better examples of trollish ways and peculiarities than do the troll stories themselves, dwelling much upon their power of changing themselves from hideous ogres and ogresses into handsome princes and lovely and desolate queens and princesses.

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[1] Legends of Iceland, 1st Series, p. 120.

Amongst the trolls, Arnason has placed Grýla, and her husband Leppalúdi, the Rag-clad, the Scare-crow, and their enormous number of naughty and hideous offspring, the so-called Jóla-sveinar, (yule-swains, or Christmas-men). Of Grýla's trollish nature and cannibalism there are many stories in Iceland, as she has been used to frighten disobedient and idle children into obedience and diligence; they were told that she would go about at Christmas-time and gather together all little boys and girls who had been naughty, or lazy in learning their catechism, and walk off with them, and eat them for her Christmas dinner. This family stands in close connexion with the trolls, if it cannot be strictly considered as belonging to them. The principal difference between them is, that Grýla, although she is a shrew, and makes a sad fool of her husband, Leppalúdi, can do no harm save to children, and that only at Christmas-time, or on the dark winter nights. Exceptionally, she may, however, seize a lazy and good-for-nothing cow-keeper or herdsman when there is great scarcity of unruly children.

We should have expected to find, among the mythological stories, some tales of dwarfs and the Land-vœttir, the guardian spirits of the country. But Dr. Maurer, who has travelled through the greatest part of Iceland, for the purpose of collecting stories and legends, states that he has not found a single story wherein the *pars potior* was acted by dwarfs; nor do tales of Land-vœttir occur in any such form, since the days of Bardi Snœfellsás, and Armann in Armansfell, though incidental notices of them are contained in other stories. One story, however, in Arnason's book treats about dwarfs only, and this he has inserted into the so-called group of Church Stories, as it stands in near connexion with the name,—if not of a church,—of a priest's farm or priest's seat, in the east part of Iceland. It being unique of its kind, we will, with the reader's permission, quote it in full:—

"In former times, the church-farm of Seydisfjördr was on the south coast of that bay, no name being recorded of it in those days. Near to it stood a stone, in the shape of a house, and folk firmly believed that it was inhabited by dwarfs; wherefore it was called Dwarfstone. In after times, both the church and the priest's abode were moved to a place on the opposite shore (where they now stand), and the building of the church was commenced. When the building was nearly finished, people were not a little startled to see a house come sailing across the bay, towards the place whereon the new church was being erected. This swimming house stopped not till it was stranded on the beach, strong and firm. They who looked well at it recognized it as the Dwarfstone; and, in order to commemorate for ever the religious piety of the dwarfs, they gave the name of this stone to the new priest-farm, and called it, as it still is called, Dwarfstone."[1]

Dwarfs are mentioned, now and then, in the Tales, and their nature appears to be fully identical with the mythological idea of it; they are the possessors of hidden knowledge and arts,—seers of clear forms in the shadowy mirror of the future,—knowers of the dim and misty past,—kind to those who aid them or who need their aid,—workers of precious things wrought subtilely, and gifted with talismanic powers, for good or for evil.

In Arnason's collection occurs only one dwarf tale; but, though some stories of this class are current in Iceland, they are, it must be confessed, on various accounts, somewhat out of the reach of a collector.

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[1] Isl. Þjóðs., p. 67.

Having done our best hitherto to give a concise sketch of Icelandic superstition, as far as its mythic side is concerned, we will turn to the next group in Arnason's work, that of

GOBLIN STORIES.

The Icelandic word "draugur" (plur. "draugar"), ghost or goblin, means a man who, after his death and burial, continues to have intercourse, generally of an evil or malicious nature, with living men. Of these "draugar" there are two kinds, easily to be distinguished. Firstly, we have the so-called "Apturgöngur," who walk about after death, either of their own accord, or forced so to do by outer circumstances.

Secondly, there are the so-called "Uppvakníngar," or "Up-awakened." These are the dead whom men have called up from their graves and from their utter repose by magic spells, and whom they send upon errands, usually not of the holiest.

To these races of goblins, Arnason has added a third, that of "Fylgjur," followers, beings that follow either a person or a family, and are sometimes considered to be mischievous. Of these, some appear in the forms of dogs and various other animals.

The "Apturgöngur" are generally such as have passed a full and blissful life, wanting for nothing, and cannot reconcile themselves to the silence and discomfort of the grave, but constantly come back to look after the riches they have left, either buried like themselves, or in the hands of their heirs. This is not always the case, however. Children that have been exposed are restless in death. People who have died suddenly or violently often walk again; they have not been duly prepared for eternity, and have been refused entrance into the regions of the blest. Then again, there are those whose graves have been dug wrong (for a grave in Iceland must always be dug from east to west), and who cannot repose therein. These latter generally appear upon earth in dreams and visions, and will rest peacefully as soon as they to whom they have shewn themselves re-arrange their tombs. Furthermore, there are those who have accepted a bidding, but not lived to perform their wish. Old misers are particularly fond of returning to the secret places where, in life, they hid their hard-gained treasures. Evil-doers, who were always bent, when alive, upon injuring their neighbours, will follow, as best they can, their wicked propensities after death. Yet again, there are those to whom love or hatred for those they have left behind leaves no rest in the tomb. Very numerous are the tales of those who rise again, in order to wreak vengeance upon some detested enemy of their living days. Many of these ghosts return from the grave to fulfil some unaccomplished vow or threat uttered in life. Love is often the cause of this hideous vindictiveness; but it will be found, for the most part, that they who wander malignantly after death, walked among men malignantly before it. No goblin stories of any nation can equal in horror those current in Iceland. The Sagas, particularly that of "Grettir Asmundsson," and "Eyrbyggja Saga" (not to mention others), have given, in the powerful and terse language of the classic time, such forcible and plastic descriptions of goblins, as may be said to be the mothers of many that occur in the present folk-lore. We must not be misunderstood, however. The modern folk-lore has its own ghosts and goblins numberless; the spirit may be old, but it wears a new shape. In these tales, as well as in most others, the learned Vigfússon's observation holds good,—that "old and new live here together, inseparably."

Where "Apturgöngur" or ghosts haunt, folk say that there is something evil or unclean (óhreint),—and that so foul is the goblin, that its very touch makes faint those whom it does not kill.

Sometimes, as it is told, the dead come forth from their graves, in hosts, on New Year's-eve, and this is called the rising of the churchyard. On this occasion, they all rise in their grave-clothes, enter the church, perform certain religious rites, and then return to their rest. But, although these are ghosts, they do not belong to any of the ill-disposed classes cited above, their object being only to visit the place where they worshipped their God while alive. While they are in the church, their graves remain open for them, and do not close till their return. On New Year's-eve also, will appear, with the others in the churchyard, the ghosts of those who will die in the ensuing year in the parish; and whosoever is sharp-eyed enough to see into the world of spirits will perceive these New Year's guests, if he wait either in the churchyard or in the church itself. If the spirit of him who watches be among the latter, he will die within a year; but he does not generally know his own ghost, although it be in the crowd. Stories, however, exist recording the contrary.

When a new churchyard is made, the first man buried therein does not corrupt or waste away, but remains unchanged, to receive all those who come after him. This man is called the "waking-man," for he watches the graveyard. These beings are, however, seldom seen, but, when beheld, are frightful of look, with a ruddy countenance, as some say, and dressed in either a red or green jacket.

When the grave of a sorcerer is opened, his skull is found open and uncorrupted, with all the brain in perfect order. On looking closely at the brain, one can see it throb and pulse as if the man were living; this is because the soul is kept there till the day of judgment.

If such a skull be found, it must be covered with earth before the grave is closed again; it must be buried in a hole dug for it in one of the corners of the grave, before the reading of prayers or singing of hymns begins.

From the forms of some ghosts there is said to issue a fiery exhalation like burning embers, which live and glow long after their production.

If there be any suspicion that a man will walk after his death, pins or needles should be driven into the soles of the corpse's feet, in order to prevent his doing so; or a nail driven into his tomb during the service of the next Sunday after the burial, in the interval between the reading of the Epistle and the chanting of the Gospel (for, in Iceland, the Gospel is chanted before the altar).

We have remarked before that children in Iceland were sometimes exposed, and that popular belief made them walk after death. It can scarcely be supposed that they wander in spirit, for the purpose of renewing their extremely brief and rude experience of life. Most probably all stories of this kind spring from the consideration that they who could perpetrate so horrible a crime deserved to suffer terrible vengeance from the hands of the dead infants who were thus neglected. In heathen times, the term "exposed" was applied to children who were so treated because they were unhopeful, or had some bodily fault, or because some bad omen preceded or accompanied their birth.

In the earliest days of Christianity, the term was applied to children who died before having received holy baptism; these the bigoted clergy ordered to be buried far away from all sacred places. In later days, exposed children were only those who were base born, and whom either father or mother exposed, for fear of the ignominy that would attach to the names of such as had children out of wedlock.

Places where exposed children are may be found out by a sound of shrill and terrible screaming, often before and after a storm. This kind of scream is called "the howling of the exposed," and is so awful and eerie, that it curdles the blood in the hearts of those who hear it. This cry is different from the so-called "dead howl," which is sometimes heard in churchyards, and comes either from the entombed foe of a man who has just been committed to the earth, or from one who has been buried alive.

These beings walk on one elbow and one knee, their arms and legs being crossed. Their malice is particularly directed towards travellers, whom they strive to lead astray. The time they choose for these feats is one of fog and darkness, when the wanderer is bewildered by the mist, anxious to reach his bourne, weary with travel, and footsore with stumbling over the broken ground. If they succeed in walking three times round the traveller, he loses his wits, and remains a miserable idiot to the end of his days.

Having thus done our best to throw some light upon the subject of the gloomy "Apturgöngur," we will now turn to those ghosts which have been summoned from the tomb by magic spells, without themselves having any desire to return to the upper world.

We have here to deal with the darkest portion of the popular superstition, and horrible enough are some of its details. Goblins of this class are called "the Up-awakened" (Uppvakníngar), and the belief in them dates from high antiquity. Old laws of Scandinavia mention this raising of the dead by witchcraft, as do also several of the Sagas and many old poems. For example, it is stated that a man made of clay, into which was thrust the heart of some animal, was used as a defence against the enemy;[1] and that a man cut in wood, and containing a human heart, was made to move, speak, and perform the will of his maker.[2] Various methods of raising the dead are recommended. Some bid one take the bone of a dead man, and exercise witchcraft upon it until it assumes a man's form, when it is fit to be sent upon baleful errands. This Sending can wreak no evil upon him against whom it has been sent, if he know so to receive it as to grasp to the very bone out of which it has been made, or if he can pronounce its name. Others recommend another plan. The sorcerer must exercise his art on a Friday night that divides the 18th day of a month from the 19th, or the 28th from the 29th. He must go, in the middle of the night, to the churchyard and to a tomb, furnished with a Paternoster which he has written backwards upon a slip of paper or scrap of skin, the evening before, with the quill of a bird called the moor-snipe, and with his own blood drawn from a wound which he has himself made in his left arm. He must also take with him a rod upon which he has written the proper magic runes. It is considered safer to choose one of the smaller tombs. When he has chosen one, he rolls the rod backwards and forwards over it, repeating perpetually the reversed Paternoster, together with other magic spells and formulæ. After some time, the tomb begins to move and quake; the goblin is already moving upwards, very slowly, for these ghosts are most unwilling to quit their repose in the grave, and often pray to be left in peace. While the ghost is rising, all kinds of monstrous and awful sights surround the sorcerer, who must pay no heed to them, but repeat all the more eagerly his spells, and roll the rune-rod quicker and quicker over the grave, until the dead man is half out of his tomb. But, at the same time, he must take the greatest care that none of the earth fall outside the compass of the tomb, for that earth can no human art or power return to its place. As now the goblin stands half above his grave, he must be asked two questions,—never three, or he will sink again beneath the weight of the holy number. The questions are usually: Who he was when alive; and, If he was a strong man. Others say that the one question will suffice,—"How old are you?" If the ghost declare that he has had the strength of a middle-aged man, it is not advisable to go further in the business, for when he has entirely risen from the tomb, a wrestling ensues between him and the sorcerer, and these goblins have invariably double the strength they had in life, and double the vigour that one expects from their age. It is for this reason that sorcerers in general choose the tombs of youths between twelve and fourteen years of age, or sometimes of folk up to thirty years old, but never those of men older than themselves. If all goes smoothly, the sorcerer continues his spells until the goblin is quite clear of the earth. A great deal yet remains to be done. When the ghost is well out of the grave, his features are covered with a filthy foam and slime called the "corpse-froth," which the spell-worker must lick off with his own tongue; having done this, he must open a wound under the little toe of his right foot, and smear with the blood the goblin's tongue. After this the dead man and the sorcerer must wrestle together, and if the sorcerer can fling his adversary, the latter must obey him in everything; but if the ghost fling the sorcerer, the latter must accompany him down into his grave, and none who have suffered this fate have ever been known to return.

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[1] See Skáldskaparmál. Copenh., 18~~5~~48.

[2] Fornmanna Sögar, III., pp. 100, 101.

Here is another way of proceeding recorded and recommended, as soon as the goblin shall have risen half out of his tomb. The sorcerer must attack him while all below his waist is underground, and bend him over on to his back, bathing at the same time the goblin's tongue in warm human blood. If, at this period, the sorcerer think it safer to replunge the dead man into his tomb, and so avoid the wrestle, he must repeat over him the name of the Trinity, or the Paternoster. Should it happen, however, that the ghost has been himself a sorcerer, more ceremonies will be required to drive him down again into his grave. He who has evoked him must hold in his hand cords attached to all the church bells, and ring them with all his might and main, the louder and the wilder the peal, the better. But should the goblin get hold of the cords, as he assuredly will try to do, and ring the bells himself, the wretched man who has called him from his rest will not have a shadow of power over him. This proceeds from the custom sorcerers had, when they had raised a ghost, of chiming every available bell, and repeating every available formula, in order to get rid of him, save those they had made use of to summon him up from the lower world. If the sorcerer cannot get rid of the ghost he has raised, the latter will haunt him and his children, even to the ninth generation. During the first forty years of their goblin existence, these "Up-awakened" grow more powerful every year. During the next forty years, they are at a stand-still; and during the forty ensuing years, their strength wanes and wastes away. A greater *post-mortem* age is awarded to no ghost, save by extraordinary spells.

The objects of the sorcerer, in waking up the dead, are various. In ancient times, it was quite as common to raise them for the purpose of knowing the mysteries of future fate, as for that of sending them on malignant missions against an enemy. In more modern times, they were sent forth upon slaughterous errands. Hence the common name of "Sending."

When a ghost of this kind must be destroyed before his days are accomplished, all the means before told are used. It is expedient to cut off the heads of some goblins, and place them at their thighs or feet; or to leave a space between the severed head and trunk through which a man, particularly the priest, may walk, in order that head and neck may never grow together again.

Many methods besides these are recorded. Sometimes the Sending (who is generally very vain of his powers), is induced to assume the form of some small beast or insect, either by taunts or flattery, and to creep into a bottle or into an empty marrow-bone; once there, he is corked up tight for his folly. Sendings thus entrapped are generally cast into morasses, or stowed away in secret hiding-places, where no inquisitive fingers are likely to grope. Woe betide him who, unsuspecting, finds the marrow-bone or bottle subsequently, and uncorks it! The goblin gains ten times his original force by being imprisoned, and ten times his old malignity. Like the genius in Solomon's lead-sealed urn, which the fisherman, in the "Arabian Nights," found and opened, he is apt to treat his liberator with scorn and revenge.

Another way of getting rid of these goblins is to obtain the assistance of a "power-poet,"[1] or improvisatore, whose words are accompanied by such "heat of soul," that they can burst demon-hearts, or drive ghostly enemies into imprisonment in rocky gulfs or beneath the earth for ever.

Many goblin tales exist, the analysis of which would be so horrible, that we prefer to omit all notice of them from these pages.

To the goblin group, Arnason has added stories of Fylgjur ("followers"), which are very common in Iceland. These Fylgjur have a pedigree of most enviable antiquity. In very ancient times they appear as spirits who only allow themselves to be seen on rare occasions, and then, most generally, in the form of women. Far from being evilly disposed, they are to the man they follow as guardian spirits, and either regulate or personify his luck or success in all things. Every man had such a guardian angel, without whom he could neither have lived, moved, nor had his being; on the man's death, this spirit must needs be received by some other mortal.[2] Should the guardian spirit, however, find none to follow after the death of her owner, she dies herself also; so says the heathen belief.

In the same way, there were "followers" belonging to whole families, who were called "ættar-fylgjur,"—

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[1] Compare the story of the Man-whale, Icelandic Legends, 1st Series.

[2] See Hallfredr Saga, in Fornsögur; Leipzig, 1860, p. 114. Viga-Glúms Saga, in Íslendínga Sögur II., 1830, ch. ix.

"family followers,"—and who benefited each member, both spiritually and materially.[1] It appears, from the older stories, that this being was at the free disposition of him to whom it belonged, so that its owner could give it away to any other person whom he deemed worthy of its acceptance. This feature of the subject is unique and purely northern.

These beings appear to be near akin to what Sagas sometimes call "Dream-women." They speak to him whom they follow in dreams; and, according to what is stated of them in the sad and beautiful Saga of Gísli Súrsson,[2] two such women followed one man, one a constant bearer of good tidings concerning the future, and the other of bad. When such Fylgjur visited other men in dreams than those to whom they were allotted, they were called "Mar," or "Mara," and seldom were bearers of good tidings, being, on the contrary, of fierce and dangerous nature.

Yngl. 16; Vatnsd. c. 42.

incubus, Augustin. C. D. 15,23. Isid. Orig. 8,11.

In later times, the name Fylgjur took a more sinister signification, answering to followers of an evil kind, ghosts that have been roused from the marble sleep, whom none can lay, and spirits who only appear when mischief is in the wind.

The origin of these Fylgjur is the after-birth of a child (we need scarcely particularize medically), and

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Kynfylgia, Fas. I,122.

[1] See Völsunga Saga (Fas. I., Copenh., 1829, p. 122), ch. 4. Vatnsdæla, in Fornsögur. Leipzig, 1860, p. 58.

[2] See Saga Gísla Súrssonar. Copenh. 1849, pp. 41, 44–45; 58, 59; 63–65.

Kona sú er fylgt hafði þeim frændum, Vd. c. 36. p. 58. Hér ero nú komnar hans fylgjar, ÓT. (1853), c. 3. Nú sækja at mér fylgjur Úsvífs, Nj. c. 12. p. 20₂₆. Fuglar þeir munu vera manna fylgjar, Gunnl. 2. Mannafylgjur eru þat, er illan hug hafa á þér, Bjarn. Hít. p. 48. þar sem þínar fylgjar mega ei standast hans fylgjar, Hálfs c. 6.

assuredly the Icelandic idea attached to this physiological fact is strange. This after-birth,—we cling to the term we have chosen,—is still called the "child's follower."

In former times, as well as modern, much superstitional belief surrounded this "follower." According to some, it was considered holy, and was buried under the threshold of the main entrance to the house; and it is still the custom, where it can be carried out, to bury it in the consecrated ground of a churchyard. That it was considered holy, was a consequence of the belief, common enough, that there remained in it a portion of the child's soul. If this child's follower was thrown out into the open air, and left a prey to wild beasts and ravenous birds, it often fell into the possession of some evil spirit; in which case the child was disastrously fated to be follower-less for the rest of his life. But when this after-birth was duly guarded, the child had a follower until death, generally in the form of that animal whose disposition its own most resembled. Thus, these followers appeared sometimes in the shape of a bear, an eagle, a wolf, an ox, a pig, a lion, or a leopard. The followers of deceitful men and fraudulent sorcerers took the shape of a fox or a jackall; those of fair women, the shape of a swan. This superstition is ancient, and many details are connected with it, to enter into which would lead us too far out of our way. It is a curious fact, that, even in these days this idea holds ground, the form most frequently attributed

Ok eigi fara litlar fylgior firir þer, því at i þinu föruneyti ero biört guð; en þeirra samvistu má ek eigi bera, því at ek hefi annars konar nátturu, Fms. 10,2625. Miklar fylgjur ok máttugar, Fas. 1,6. þar hefir þú sét konunga fylgjur, Fas. 1, 367. Þat er fylgja

to the "follower," being that of the dog; not, however, to the exclusion of other beasts dwelling both on land and in the deep. Folk with delicate senses will very often *smell* the follower, if it be near, and, should it be evil, it will be necessary to spit north, south, east and west, and even to swear moderately in order to get rid of it.

While a man is in good health his "follower" goes *before* him (we must apologize for the contradiction in terms); but, should his death be near, the Fylgja follows him. Whether or no this Fylgjur be, in the popular belief, identical with that spirit which hovers around a dead man, we cannot pretend to decide; but, as the superstition goes, there haunts every corpse, until its burial, a spirit visible or invisible. This is called Svipr—"expression," being a spirit that wears the expression of the dead man's face. The existence of these Svipr is, however, not always terminated by the burial of the corpse. Instances are on record, proving that some have wandered on earth, long after their interment. They can often assume the form of a fog-grey cuneiform column, featureless, unsubstantial, and wafted on the wind. In connexion with the Svipr, is probably the common belief, that the spirit of the departed wanders hither and thither, visiting every place that the dead man visited, setting foot wherever he set foot, and only entering its last resting-place when it has re-trodden the dead man's every step.

In later times, the Fylgjur that belong to a man or

Odds, frænda okkar, Fas. 2,172 (Örvar-O. c.4). þar sem sá varga, þat eru manna fylgjur; en þar sem hit óarga dýr fór fyrir, þat er konungs fylgja, Fas. 3,78 (Hrólf. Gautr. s. c.7). þar sem hit óarga dýr er, þat er fylgja Rólfs konungs, ibid. p. 95.

a family, are looked upon as very dangerous, malicious, and hard to deal with. They assume the shape of a man or of a woman. Some of these Fylgjur are "a~~m~~pturgöngur," who, restless in the tomb, and parched with the thirst for vengeance, rise again and drink the tears of him they hate, and those of his children, to the ninth generation. Of these goblins, the female ones are by far the worst, as they seem to have lost every gentle virtue of humanity, and as they act with devilish brutality. They are usually dressed in a witch-like style, and wear, if we are not mistaken, a brown faldr[1] on the head, with the horn turned the wrong way, and hanging over the back. They are often seen in red stockings, and are apt to suck their fingers. These female goblin-followers are called "Skottur," (from the Icelandic noun skott, *i. e.*, tail, their faldr hanging behind like a tail).

The dress of the male goblin-followers has also its peculiarities. These beings are usually clothed in a brown-coloured jacket, with a broad-brimmed, low-crowned, slouched hat; sometimes, by way of change, they wear a brown cap, in the crown of which a hole is so cut, that they can draw it over their neck, leaving their face sticking out of it; which in Icelandic domestic language is called "To hang the herdsman." These ghosts are named "Morar," from the brown tint of their jerkins. They, in their quality of Fylgjur, have much running to do in their lives, some having to follow several people at once. In consequence of this, certain old Fylgjur have been found, who had walked away their legs, up to the very knees.

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[1] This Icelandic word is the name of the national head-dress, which in shape somewhat resembles a Greek helmet.

þú munt vera feigr maðr, ok munt þú ſ 2 séð hafa fylgju þína, segir Njáll, Nj. c. 41. p. 62 n.

Much more could we tell about the habits and nature of ghosts and goblins, but both time and space are dwindling, and, moreover, we dread to exhaust the patience of our readers: of whom those that are conversant with the Icelandic language, should they care to pursue this curious subject any farther, will do well to consult Arnason's work in the original, pp. 222—404.

The third group of tales in Arnason's book, are those of witchcraft, which he has divided into tales of second-sight, tales of various kinds of enchantment, and tales of sundry sorcerers.

The gift of second-sight by no means belongs to all sorcerers, nor are all those that possess it addicted to witchcraft. Many a man is endowed with this strange power, who regards the black art as an invention of the evil-one, and who would burn a book of magic as soon as look at it. People who possess this power of seeing spirits, beings and events invisible to others, are called "Skygnir-menn,"—clear-sighted men. The child whose eyes the water touches in baptism, has no chance of ever becoming second-sighted. Many second-sighted people have a hairy cross on the breast, and eyebrows grown together. These no evil or unclean being can approach from before; but to such approaches from behind they are more liable than other mortals. The second-sighted can see elves and other spiritual beings, without their leave, and thus can never be taken by surprise by the great invisible. Instances exist of blind men who, though the earth was to them the blackness of darkness for ever, could see plainly members of the mystic world of shadows.[1] Anyone possessed of the gift of seeing unclean beings, can communicate it to another by making him put his head under his armpit: and, peeping through it, he will see all the same appearances as his master, but only as long as he enjoys the protection of the armpit. When he is out of that position he is as far from second-sight as ever he was before. The second-sighted man fears neither ghosts nor goblins.

Besides this second-sight, is another,—piercing-sightedness, a power of "seeing through hill and knoll," which consists in the ability of beholding things and actions at vast distances, and in such places as are not by any possibility accessible to the outward eye. This we believe to correspond with what the *Scotch* call "Second-sight."

Men who are clear-sighted, or ghost-seers, can tell, by walking into the churchyard on New Year's night, how many will be buried in it during the ensuing year. If they themselves are amongst the ghosts that they see in the burial ground, they do not generally perceive the identity of their own double. A strange story is told of a second-sighted man in the East of Iceland, who died some years ago. He was very clever, and almost infallible in foretelling the death of other people. But concerning his own decease, he always said: "I am not clear about my death; it is for ever veiled in smoke." And he died suffocated by smoke, in 1832.

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[1] See the Story of Bjarni the Blind (Bjarni Blindi). Isl. Þjóðs., I., 407.

Many more curious instances of this kind of second-sight are given by Arnason.

But it is not the sight alone which is endowed with preternatural sharpness. The power of second-hearing (if we may use such a word), is granted to some people, who then take cognizance of sayings and doings in other parts of the world, through their ears, although no sound be perceptible to anyone else. Nor need they be alone for this; they can exercise their wonderful power in the midst of a numerous company, and undisturbed by the wildest din of talk and laughter in their neighbourhood; in the midst of arduous or complicated work, and undistracted by close attention to the minutest details of their occupation. One is reminded of the strange phenomena that often are said to occur at the deathbeds of earnest and enthusiastic Christians, and in the beautiful and touching legends of the martyrs and saints:—where, in the dissolution of the brain, the dying man hears heavenly music, the voices of the countless choir of angels who chant the glory of the Omnipotent, and the vibrating of the celestial lyres; and sees the bands of the blest, who are not to be numbered, crowding in welcome around him, clothed in white, and bearing the palm of victory over death. There are but few tales of this rare and wonderful gift.

The third kind of second-sight Arnason calls prophesying or foretelling,—the intuitive knowledge of future events. This gift seems, in all histories and all legends, to be rather of the far past than of the present. In the Sagas we find numerous instances of folk who foresee and predict, amongst whom it may suffice to mention Njal, known, we suppose, to most of our readers through Dr. Dasent's translation of the life of that hero.

In modern times, we may safely state, that scarcely any instance of this future-sight can be met with, albeit stories of this kind come, from time to time, to the surface of the folk-lore, though Arnason knows none of unquestionably modern date. Amongst gifts of this kind Arnason has given us instances of dreaming; dreams standing, very often, in close connexion with knowledge of future events. Superstitional experience teaches us that the gift of dreaming leaves him who either tells false dreams, or refuses to tell his dreams at all; as also, that they who move their head before their feet, on awakening, do not remember their visions of the night. There are also great differences between a dream dreamt in a crescent moon, and one dreamt when the moon is waning. Dreams that are dreamt before full-moon, are but a short while in coming true; those dreamt later, take a longer time for their fulfilment. To interpret a dream is a complicated affair. One Icelandic proverb says: "So comes each dream true, as it is interpreted;" another: "No mark in dreams"—(*i.e.* dreams betoken nought); and a third: "Often betokens a bad dream a trifling matter." One thing, however, seems to be pretty sure, that some *names* are *hard* (*i.e.* bad) in dreams, and others good or favourable. "Hard," or bad, are all such names as are derived from stones and the name of Thor; as also those of female names that are derived from "Valkyrjur (*i.e.* goddesses of death and manslaughter), and from trolls. Many other things must also be taken into account when dreams are interpreted; the friendly or unfriendly disposition of him who is seen in the dream; his words, appearance, and demeanour. Many animals, seen in sleep, are portentous for good or evil. To dream of riding on a yellow horse, is a token of death. (This calls to mind the opening of the fourth seal, in the Apocalypse: "Et cum aperuisset sigillum quartum, audivi vocem quarti animalis dicentis: Veni et vide. Et ecce *equus pallidus;* et qui sedebat super cum, nomen illi *mors.*") The sight of worms is a sign of some one's treacherous conduct to the dreamer. The same with regard to foxes. Wading or swimming through water is a sign of disease. Long hair or beard (always in dreams, be it understood,) betokens the acquisition of honour or wealth. Dirty clothes, or a troublesome walk through a filthy place are signs of riches. Tight clothes on a robust form, (particularly a close-fitting short-jacket, on one who has a bald head,) betoken the approach of some trouble or infamy to him who dreams of himself in such form or attire. He who dreams that he enters a church will die soon. Hundreds of instances of these curious dream-interpretations exist; but sleep-visions are often locally interpreted, the same sign in one parish meaning the reverse of what it means in the next, and so forth: thus, a whole volume might be written upon the Icelandic interpretation of dreams.

All this is a digression. Let us return to our real topic, that of witchcraft, and consider for a few moments the various manners in which it is performed.

Witchcraft has had its golden-age in Iceland, as in other countries, but has had also, like all things in nature, its fall and decay; and it exists now only in the memory of the people, and in the records of the folk-lore.

Witchcraft is not always used against one's neighbour for baleful purposes, but has besides another end in view,—that of making its master rich in purse, and secure from persecution in person.

We will now shew in what way magic may be used for the enrichment of him who practices the art.

When a man wishes to get riches, at once vast and inexhaustible, and always waxing during his lifetime, he must do his best to get hold of the so-called "Devil's pair of drawers;" also called "Breeches of Fins,"—so called, probably, because the Finnish nation has from earliest antiquity been famous for witchcraft,) "Money-trousers," "Dead-man's pantaloons," and "Papey-drawers."[1] This precious garment may be obtained in the following way. He who desires the unmentionables in question must make another man promise to lend him his skin after death. A certain sort of compact is necessary. When his obliging friend is dead, the man who thirsts after wealth must go to the other's grave, dig him up, and take off his skin, from the waist downwards, paying good heed not to split it save at the middle. Thus he comes into possession of the coveted pair of drawers, which he must at once put on, and which will cling to his flesh until he induces some one else to consent to wear the same ghastly pantaloons. Once donned, these breeches are, however, useless, save the owner contrive to steal a coin from some destitute widow, between the First and Second Lesson, on one of the three great feasts of the church,—Yule, Easter, or Whitsuntide. After this, the drawers will draw to them silver and gold out of living people's purses and pockets, so that the owner's pouch is never empty. But great heed must be taken not to give away the first stolen coin. Although these drawers are a great worldly gain to their wearer and possessor, there is yet a thorn to the rose: he cannot get rid of them at will, albeit the everlasting welfare of his soul depends upon his doing so. If he dies in them, he is both eternally lost, and his whole body is covered with infernal vermin. He must, therefore, before his death, induce some one to take them off him, and wear them. When this change is effected, the wearer must first doff the right leg of the drawers, which his obliging friend must instantly don. Now if, at this moment, the latter repent him of his bargain, he repents him too late, for in the twinkling of an eye, do what he will, the left leg is doffed and donned, and both legs will stick to him for the rest of his life, save he contrive to repeat the same process, with an obliging friend of his own. These drawers never lose their power of attracting money, nor can they ever be worn out. Some say that they are from the devil himself, and given by him only to those who have sold him their souls. This would account for their first name, as well as for all the diabolic ceremonies used in procuring them. Beside this very advantageous use of human skin for drawers, we must state that it is an excellent thing for shoes. Shoes made of it can never be worn out, except one walk with them in church or on sacred ground; should one do so, they rot away in a moment, doing, however, no farther injury to their wearer.

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[1] Papey is an island on the east coast of Iceland, and Arnason thinks that the name "Papey-drawers" was derived from the fact that the owners of this island have always been rich people, popular fancy ascribing their wealth to their possession of the Devil's pantaloons.

Another way of acquiring riches, is that of catching the "flæðarmús," flood, or sea-mouse, which can be done only in the following way: First take the hair of an immaculate virgin, and make a net of it, with such fine meshes that a mouse can be entangled in it. Then cast out this net into the sea, where you know that there is money at the bottom, for the flood mouse is to be found nowhere save where gold or silver lie hidden beneath the waves. If the place be properly chosen, the net need lie out only one night, and the mouse will be found caught in it, the next morning. Now the mouse must be taken and brought home, and kept either in a box or in a wheat-barrel, and maiden-hair must it have to lie upon. But great care must be taken that it do not escape, for it will try, by all possible tricks, to get away again into the sea. After this a coin must be placed under it, wrapped in the maiden-hair that forms its bed, and every day the mouse will draw up from the sea a coin of the same value as the one upon which it lies. By all means, however, must it be taken to the sea and thrown in, or given to somebody else, before the death of its owner. If this be not done, it will, at its owner's last breath, run away to the sea of its own accord, and mighty storms will arise all along that coast, the resistless floods will battle with the resistless winds, and ocean and shore be covered with death, and wreck, and ruin. No storms equal these in calamitous fury.

These are the principal means for obtaining silver or gold in coins. But for procuring other objects of one's desire, other proceedings are necessary, some of which we will now mention.

To become rich in butter and wool, sorcerers have invented the so-called "tilberi,"—fetcher, another name for which is "Snakkur" (the reel of a weaver's shuttle).

This magic instrument is thus made: A woman steals the rib of a dead man from some churchyard on the morning of Whitsunday, and wraps it up either in stolen grey sheep's wool or stolen thread. Some say that the wool on the back of a sheep which belongs to a poor widow, must be used for this purpose. So wrapped up in stolen wool the woman lays the rib on her breast, and goes three times to Communion, each time spitting secretly the consecrated wine into the hole in either end of the bone. At the first draught of wine, the fetcher is motionless, at the second he moves slightly, and at the third he has acquired his full life and strength. When he has become too strong for the woman to bear him longer at her breast, she opens a wound in her thigh, whereto she places the fetcher, and wherefrom he draws all his nourishment for the rest of his existence. "Fetcher" mothers are, therefore, always known by a blood-red wart on the thigh, and by their walking lame. If such a woman bear a child, and the fetcher contrive to get at her breast (and he will do his best to accomplish this object), she is lost, and speedily dies. These fetchers have been used to drain the milk from a neighbour's cows and ewes; and evening and morning they come to the dairy window, where their mother is churning under the window-sill, and climbing up, scream, "Full belly, mother." Then the woman lifts the lid from the churn, saying: "Give up, blessed son," or "Throw it out into the churn, lad." At these words, the fetcher pours out all the milk he has sucked, into the churn, whence the goodwife makes plentiful butter. This kind of butter is precisely like any other, save that, if one make the mark of the Cross upon it, it will either vanish away, or dwindle down to mere froth. When this monster sucks the cows, he leaps on to their backs, and stretching down on both sides, sucks with both his mouths. Some declare that he has only one mouth; in this case, having drained one side of the udder, he turns round on the cow's back and drains the other. Sometimes he sucks so violently, or treats the beasts so ill, that their udders swell up and they lose all milk. One who wishes to protect his beasts against all possible ravages of the fetcher, makes the sign of the Cross beneath their udders and over their loins, or, best of all, lays the Book of the Psalms of David upon their backs.

When the fetcher is used for stealing wool, he goes to a place where the fleece is spread out to dry in the sunshine, and twisting rapidly all the wool round himself, till he is like a ball, rolls away with it, so nimbly, that no one can follow him. Other accounts state that he is not sent to *steal* wool, but rather to gather, all the country over, such fleeces as have fallen off the sheep in the walks and pastures, and which are not heeded by the shepherds and farmers.

If a woman was convicted of nourishing a fetcher, she was, in former days, with the monster hanging to her, either burnt or drowned.

When a fetcher's mother grows too old and finds herself too feeble to support any longer the loss of blood caused by the monster, she sends him up into the mountains, bidding him gather from three commons the manure of all the lambs, into one heap. In the performance of this task, he is so eager and restless (mostly because he wishes to get home to his nourishment), that he bursts at last from weariness, and thus his earthly career is ended. Of course his walk, considering his shape, consists of a series of bounds or springs.

These are the chief facts concerning this monster of the popular superstition, which seems to personify the evil greed of farming folk who are over-anxious to increase their own stock of household goods at the expense of others.

One thing often earnestly desired by men, is a knowledge of the things to be. For the purpose of penetrating the secrets of the future, a "saying-spirit," or prophesying spirit, is highly needful, to procure which, according to the only method recommended by sorcerers, a man must do as follows: He must forsake the company of his fellow men, and dwell in some secret and far-off spot, where none can find or approach him; for, should he be seen or accosted by human beings, during his lone enchantments, he is lost. He must dwell in the shadow, turned towards the north. Over his face he must spread a membranous film, and under this recite certain magic spells. The film covers the mouth of the enchanter, and falls in between his lips, making a kind of little sack behind them. The spirit, when it yields to the spells, comes flying swiftly towards the mouth, intending to get into the stomach of the man, who, as soon as the spirit touches the film, closes his lips, and thus imprisons him in a membrane from which no spirit has ever succeeded in escaping. This film-entrapped spirit the man puts into and keeps in a box. The spirit is silent until the man spit into the box, during the Holy Communion, the consecrated wine and sprinkle him; very good nourishment for him too is dew that falls in the month of May. This foretelling spirit now informs his master of everything he desires to know. He is particularly talkative when the storm-clouds are wildly whirled over heaven by the strong east wind. If the spirit escape from the box and the film, he flies into his master and drives him mad for ever. These prophesying or saying-spirits are the "vofur" or wandering ghosts of dead people, and when they grow extremely old, their voice becomes cracked, indistinct, wheezy, and lisping. If this being escape not from its prison, or if none will receive him from the owner who is quitting him and the world, there is nothing to be done with him save to bury both box and spirit, and to make a cross over the tomb. But something unclean will haunt that spot ever afterwards.

Then we must touch upon the practice of sitting out at the crossing of four ways, in order to enchant the dead into telling of future events. This sitting at the crossways we have mentioned in our first series of

Legends, but there only in connexion with the belief in elves; all the man had to do in such a case being to keep silent until daybreak. Here, on the contrary, more must be done, and here the sorcerer takes both an active and passive part in the proceedings. Thus, on New Year's-eve (others say on midsummer night), the man who is about to sit at the crossways must leave home at night, provided with a vast mantle of the skins of grey cats, or of sheepskins with the fleece on, or of the hide of an old ox or walrus, and with an axe in his hand. When he comes to a place where four roads, at the end of each of which a church may be seen, meet, he sits down at the point of crossing, and wraps himself completely up in the hide or mantle, so that no part of his body protrudes. Then he holds his axe before him in both hands, and gazes hard at the edge of it, neither turning his eyes one way or the other, nor moving, nor uttering a single sound, whatever he may see and hear. Thus he must remain motionless until the dawn of the next day, reciting inwardly the spells that call forth the dead. Then come to him his deceased relatives, and tell him the things to be for many future ages. If the sorcerer, without a movement and without a word, contrives to sit until dawn, gazing on his axe-edge, and, listening to the prophesyings of ghostly lips, he not only knows and remembers all that he has been told of the future, but has also broken a strong barrier between himself and the dead, and can, as often as he chooses, return to the same place and draw from them what information he requires. But, although popular belief makes success in this enterprise possible, yet no one has ever been known to sustain unflinchingly the trial. There is considerable irony in the stories told of those who, after resisting all the riches and dainties imaginable, fell a prey to the charms of mutton fat.

One of these unfortunate out-sitters, who, as all the rest of them, succumbed to the last temptation, was named Jón Krukk. He remained undazzled by the glories displayed to him, unmoved by the most savoury meats, the most juicy fruits, and the most sparkling of wines, until,—just before dawn,—came the luckless piece of mutton fat, and into the trap he fell. When he returned home, his wits were changed, he was strange to speak to and odd in his behaviour; he went out at evening, and remained out the whole night through. After a while he began to prophesy, and his prophecies are collected in the volume called the "Krukkspá" or prophecies of Krukk. It may, perhaps, interest our readers to see some of his foretellings, which we quote:—

"Men will fall back more and more, in strength and growth, till at last it be eight men's task to lift one eighth of a single cotton-grass tuft."

"South Iceland will sink into the sea, but its north will rise higher and higher out of the ocean."

Again, "South Iceland shall be destroyed by fire, the north by ice."

"The cathedral of Reykjavik shall sink through the earth, where nine priests stand, fully attired in priestly robes, before its altar."[1]

Many of his prophecies current in tradition declare that a farm shall be destroyed, where seven sons of the farmer marry seven sisters, and many others relate to the destruction of places and houses under certain given circumstances.

When a sorcerer wished to do harm to his enemies, he sent to them, besides the Sendings before mentioned, different animals endowed with magic strength; these were called "stefni vargar," *i.e.* "vargar" (properly wolves, but here savage beast in general) sent or summoned against one, to his calamity and to the destruction of his property. Thus have these stefni-vargar been sent to rich misers who never benefited the poor, in the form of countless crowds of mice or rats, who destroyed their wealth, leaving them as poor as those whom they had formerly harshly treated. It is told that a Finn woman, being disappointed in her love for an Icelander who cared not for her, sent to Iceland a male and a female fox endowed with magic strength, and enjoined to destroy the first race of animals they encountered on landing. It so chanced that they first fell in with a flock of sheep (the good woman having counted upon their first meeting man), and devoured them in right earnest. Wherefore, from that time forth, foxes have been exceedingly destructive of Icelandic sheep.

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[1] This prophecy was quite a failure, for, on the 12th August 1849, nine priests, fully attired in sacerdotal robes for the ordination ceremony, stood before that very altar. Many common folk not only avoided the church themselves, but warned others from entering it on that occasion.

Another mode of enchantment is the use of the "wolf-ride bridle," which is made in the following way: A newly buried man is dug up, and the skin peeled off the whole length of his back; of this skin the reins are made. Then the skin of his head is flayed off, and of this the head-straps are made. The bone at the root of his tongue, called by the Icelanders the "speech-bone," is converted into the bit, and his two hip-bones into the side-irons of the bit and curb. Over this bridle, when made, magic spells must be chanted, and then it is ready for use, and whatever this bridle is cast over, man, beast, or stone,—for all things must yield to its influence,—will rise into the air and fly quicker than lightning whithersoever the rider wills. A mighty din, as of a whirlwind, accompanies this unearthly flight, and men have even seen this wolf-ride, and heard the rattling of the magic bridle. The name "wolf-ride" proceeds from the fact that in the Edda troll-women are said to ride upon wolves; afterwards, any kind of trollish and diabolical ride (particularly where such a bridle as this was concerned) was called by the same name.[1]

Human fat stolen, after proper magic spells have been exercised upon it, from the churchyard, is of great use to sorcerers. It will open all the locks of doors, as also the irons in which a thief is clasped. The sorcerer must keep a piece of it in his mouth, let it melt, and, while it melts, blow into the lock he desires to open; that is all that is required, if the devil's help be duly called for at the same time. This fat, melted in the mouth and spit upon a human rib-bone, makes of it so efficacious a whetstone for a scythe that only one sharpening is required between morning and night; if, however, the owner of the scythe look at its edge, the force of the spell is destroyed. If human fat be used for a candle, an immense saving is effected; for, if you put a bit of it into a human skull, and light it, it will burn for ever, but yield, it is true, a very small amount of light; so small, indeed, that it being, as it is, a mere rayless point, serves only to render the darkness deeper, ghastlier, and more lugubrious. One drawback to the use of such lamps is, that they can only be put out with the blood of seven brothers born in succession with no sister between them.

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[1] Compare the story of the queen of the Elves. Icel. Leg., 1st Series.

A hammer, in the supposed form of that of Thor (called in Northern mythology "Miölnir"), will inform you who has stolen anything from you. This must be made of thrice-stolen church-bell copper, and must be hardened in human blood between the first and second lesson on Whitsunday. A spike made of the same metal at the same time, is also indispensable. This spike you drive into the back of the hammer, saying, "I drive into eye of Fight-father, I drive into eye of Val-father, I drive into eye of Asa-Thor!" Then the thief feels a terrible pain in his eye. If he does not give back the stolen goods, the same driving in of the spike is repeated, and the thief loses his eye. If the spell be repeated for the third time, the thief loses both his eyes.

The use of magic letters and runes in witchcraft is likewise very interesting, especially as the art is entirely lost. The understanding of these characters is among the things that were, and lies far back in the tortuous labyrinth of ages. In Iceland there has been a vast store of magic literature, and countless great volumes of fine vellum were filled with all the knowledge of the hidden arts; but now all these are lost, violent persecutions against sorcerers having withered their luckless writers and them in the flames, or engulfed them for ever in bottomless abysses of surging and seething water. Fragments are found yet, however, of these writings; and Arnason has, in his work, mentioned several magic letters and formulæ. It may interest the reader to cast a glance over these.

Magic runes for curing diseases have in former times been innumerable, as may be seen from the Sagas. Among these Arnason mentions *Sator Arepo*, every letter of which should be cut into the fingers of a patient sick of the jaundice, whereupon his cure was certain; there were also many other illnesses and the like against which these were used with success.

If you write on your wrist, with the blood of a dog, these words, "Miax, piax, riax,"[1] and then apply to some one for help or relief in your distresses, he cannot refuse your bidding.

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[1] Is this a popular corruption of "Maximus, piissimus rex"?

Arnason has given various complicated forms of magic letters, some for seeing thieves, others for a defence against enemies or evil sendings, besides those that are of more ordinary shape and more common use (as "Freyr," "Fjölnir," "Fengr," "Þundr," "Þerkr," "Þrumr"); and the aid-rings of Charlemagne, rings sent by God, through an angel, to that monarch, aiding him in his great undertakings, and proving a safeguard against many earthly evils and dangers.

Besides the magic letters that were used for various purposes, there were also the magic runes (if the distinction be a right one, which we do not here take upon ourselves to prove). The so-called "Kvenna-galdr," magic attempts to gain the love of women, runes were often used. Runes were also cut on the "Svefn-Þorn," or sleep-thorn, which was put into the hair, or even into the ear of a sleeper, and which kept him motionless and in a deep slumber until its removal. Then there were the dream runes, which were written upon a scrap of parchment or the like, and which, when placed beneath the pillow, had the power of shewing the sleeper, in dreams, all that he wanted to know. Amongst these magic runes there were the so-called band-runes, where more characters than one are grouped (bound together) into one figure. Sometimes so many are placed together as to make a whole word, or even a whole formula. One among these many characters is the "Vedur-gapi," or weather-gape, whereby destructive tempests can be raised at the wizard's will. If a ling's head be placed on the summit of a high, sheer cliff by the sea, and this character be cut upon a cylinder of wood which must serve to stretch open the mouth of the fish, a terrible storm will arise, and countless lives be lost.

Another magic figure is the "Angur-gapi," anger-gape, wreaking a mighty deal of harm. If a round block of wood have this cut upon it, it will whirl with fierce speed away, and, traversing the land, destroy all cattle that see it; but should a man have such keen sight as to be able to read the word upon the rolling wood, its deadly course at once ceases.

The figures "Gapaldur" and "Ginfaxi," which two always went together, and which should be written each upon a piece of thin paper or thin wood, and placed, the first under the heel of the right foot, and the second under the toes of the left, assured the wearer victory in wrestling, provided he did not try his strength and skill against a sorcerer.

Then again, there was the so-called "Kaupaloki," "cheaping-tricker," which, if written on blotting paper and kept secretly under the left arm-pit, was of the greatest assistance in the driving of every description of bargain.

"Molduxi" and "blóðuxi" were two characters,—mould-ox and blood-ox, being interpreted, — which served as excellent preventives, the one to diurnal, the other against nocturnal theft.

"Ginnir," *ginner*,[1] or enticer, was a magic character the use of which is supposed to have been to charm to him who employed it the objects of his desires, and particularly the affections of his beloved.

These magic signs, letters, formulæ, &c., are so numerous that we should weary our readers out before we had enumerated the half of them; besides, their nature and ancient use are, generally speaking, lost, and more time would be required for digging them out of their old-world grave than either we could spare or the subject would justify in this place, interesting as it undoubtedly is.

To these magic characters Arnason has added numerous invocations and exorcisms, both in prose and verse. Many of these are forms of prayer against the malicious influence of spirits, sendings, and witchcraft. All of them savour of Roman Catholicism.

We will give our readers an idea of the compositions to which we allude, by quoting, sufficiently closely translated, one of the most curious of them,—to drive from oneself all that is unclean, either of men or creatures, quick or dead, abroad and within, whether of earth or air,—by Sœmundur the Learned.

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[1] We fear that we are here coining a word. Nevertheless, in "Robert of Gloucester (Ed. Hearne, 1810, pp. 402, 549), occurs the word "*gin*," which signifies according to Herbert Coleridge, *device*, and is evidently identical with the Icelandic verb "ginna" to entice, allure.

"Ego, I, N(oa), N(oas son), summon thee—witch, spirit, goblin, deity, ghost, devil, with summons, couched as follows:—From me and mine, abroad and within, men and creatures, quick or dead, on sea and land, whether from west, or from east, or from north, or from south, or there between, of darkness or of daylight, of sun or of moon, of cloud or of shine, of dew or of blood, of grass or of branches, of tree or of timber, of mould or of mite, of brain or of flesh, of brake or of bones, of sight or of sinew, of hide or of hair, of toes or of teeth, of locks or of loins, of jaw-teeth or foot-sides, named things or unnamed,—from me and my children, as also my servants, kinsmen, and relatives, even to the ninth remove, from carl and from woman. Go now, as quick as light speeds, as lightning shoots, as thunder travels, as clouds are hurled, as water runs, as vessel glides, as cormorant hovers, as falcon flies the spring-long day with a straight wind under both wings, as thought fleets, or as son to mother, man to maiden, waters to sea, blood to wounds, vessel to land, and feigh man to hell. Whosoever thou mayest be, from death or from hell, or from there between, of named things or unnamed; or in what way soever thou hast got away, naturally, or by witchcraft, or some abominable use of things, I summon thee to the judgment seat of the Lord, and thence into hell. Witness the names of the holy summon-witnesses, Raguel, Raffael, Setatyel, Mizael, Mikael, and Anasyel."[1]

These incantations, Catholic, as we have before said, jumble up the sacred with the profane, blessing with cursing, good wishes to one's neighbour with bad wishes to one's neighbour, in the harshest manner possible. In some cases, the Omnipotent is called in by men to wreak vengeance on others for the pettiest and most trivial faults, and on folk who would best be overlooked and forgotten. The priestly exorcisms of the Roman Church in Iceland were scarcely, if at all, looked upon with more respect than these; and it must be frankly said that priests were, as a general rule, at the bottom of most of them, lording it over the lay brethren, gaining reputations undeserved of supernatural power, and blinding the too easily blinded eyes of the ignorant.

Among the deeds of witchcraft Arnason has placed those of the power-poets, who have the gift of destroying by a single strophe their enemies, and of withering them up by a few lines improvised on the spur of the moment. Such a sentence as this: "Stand now on the earth, and be stiff and stark as the stem of a tree," could fix to the ground, motionless and breathless, destructive foxes. The best of these power-poets is accounted to be the greatest psalm and hymn-composer of the country, Hallgrímr Peturson, who has rendered himself immortal by a very beautiful series of passion-psalms, known by heart, we may say, by almost every Icelander. These poets were nearly as dangerous as the sorcerers, for they were always of violent temper and wrathful mind, and their words, so to speak, flame with calamity.

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[1] This formula bears a striking resemblance to the ancient griðamál and trygðamál of early Icelandic law. See Islendínga Sögur, II., Copenhagen, 1847, pp. 484—493.

To these Arnason has added *threats* and *imposition* or *curses* that have many times caused sore evil to man and property. These curses are particularly incurred if some old hag's will be altered, or if an ancient clause of a testament be disregarded. Then are all the pleasures and advantages that should be derived from the provision in question changed to disadvantage and pain.

In Iceland, as in many other countries, in the middle ages, trials for witchcraft and sorcery were common; but these ceased in the land entirely from the end of the seventeenth century. The last sentence passed against a sorcerer was, as far as we know, passed in 1690, when, however, the culprit was pardoned by the king. That prosecutions and punishments for witchcraft should have finished so early in Iceland, whereas in other countries, even the most civilized, trials and burnings of wizards continued for long afterwards, is a fact that speaks no less in favour of the natural intelligence and humanity of that strange and isolated people, than does the abolition of duel as early as the beginning of the eleventh century.

After stories of witchcraft in general, Arnason's volume contains those of sorcerers who have rendered themselves the most notorious by their doings in the black art. None among these are more celebrated than Sœmundur the Learned, Hálfdán Einarsson, or Eldjárnsson, and Eiríkur of Vogsosar. Arnason gives many *local* legends concerning other minor wizard-heroes; indeed, such are very current in the country.

These sorcerer chiefs, though living at different times, have been made contemporary by tradition; thus, for instance, in the cases of Sœmundur and Hálfdán, between whose periods is a great gulf of 450 years. But tradition will join and amalgamate similarities, regardless of lapse of time.

We have little doubt, that most of the tales which concern Sœmundur the Learned (1133) are of comparatively modern date. And, indeed, we do not even venture to assign any high age to the tradition of his having composed his beautiful poem, — Sólarljód ("The Sun-lay,") three days after his death, before he was buried, albeit, the resemblance to the tales of old heroes who sung warlike and mighty songs in their cairns or tumular resting-places, is sufficiently strong. To a fanciful reader, the poem itself might easily convey the idea of having been written by one who had passed through death, and had before his eyes the things that are to be, for, in various places, the author treats of the wondrous visions that met his view, when he came to the "worlds of torments and the abodes of the blest."[1] From the history of the times in which

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[1] See Sœmundr's Edda, Ed. Möbius. Leipzig, 1859, pp. 220—227.

Sœmundur lived, we only learn of him, that he was a most profound scholar, a zealous and devoted priest, and an extremely influential politician.[1] Yet there exists a very early legend concerning him and his studies, under a master who was so keen an astrologer that he could tell any man's future and fate from the aspect of his star, provided he knew him personally. With this master, Sœmundur studied so long (and, it is to be presumed, so hard,) that he had forgotten all his former life and doings, and even his Christian name, until a bishop-elect of Iceland, travelling to Rome, recognized, by holy inspiration, the misguided scholar, and lured him home to Iceland, from his master. This master was loth, however, to hear aught about Sœmundur's leaving. He saw, in Sœmundur's star, after the latter's escape, what he would be at, and forthwith pursued his pupil. But Sœmundur knew more of the occult science than his master wotted of; and, putting on his head, the second day of travel, a shoe full of water, and, the third day, one full of blood, led the master to believe that he had escaped drowning only to fall into the hands of an assassin. Afterwards, when Sœmundur had well escaped, and was sound and safe, out of the master's reach, the latter discovered the trick, and exclaimed, "Lucky for thee, O Sœmundur, that thou art alive. But, methinks, I have taught thee quite enough, as thou hast outwitted me in thy knowledge of the stars, and by the craft of thy cunning."[1] This tradition we take to be the mother of all other tales about Sœmundur now on record.

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[1] See Kristni Saga, in Biskupa Sögur, I., p. 28, 31.—Húngrvaka, ibid, p. 67.—Jóns Saga hins Helga (hin ebzta), ibid, p. 156.

But he himself has undergone a strange transfiguration. In the seventeenth century, when the people of the country were cramped beneath the most odious monopoly of trade by Denmark, and were starved to death by thousands, their lands being taken from them, their churches sacked, with the seal of royal authority stamping all this shame,—and what thinks modern Denmark of it ?—when perusal of their classical authors was forbidden by law, it was no wonder that the fresh fountain-springs of the people's mental life should grow flat and stagnant, their sparkle of wit grow dull, and the greenness of their fancy become sere and wither away. In dark ages, such as were these, folk's minds dwelt on the darker side of nature,—on sorcery, witchcraft, and the like,—to the partial exclusion of the fairer phases of popular superstition. He who knew, or boasted that he knew, more than his neighbour, was at once put down, scouted, and punished as a sorcerer. A dreary fog enveloped both the history of the country and its representatives. Now Sœmundur, all of a sudden, delights in outwitting the devil, and in turning his powers to the attainment of filthy lucre and the acquirement of the gain. So, at least, says legend. But history, on the contrary, declares him to have been a most zealous and useful member of the Church of Christ; the most learned man of his time, and the wisest withal. Most of our readers know that Sœmundur wrote the "Older Edda," but few know that his countrymen set him down as the keenest of sorcerers.

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[1] For a fuller account of this legend. See Jóns Saga hins Helga, eptir Gunnlang múnk. Biskupa Sögur, pp. 227—229.

Having treated of witchcraft, which, to a certain extent, is a deeper and keener knowledge of the profound powers and laws of nature than falls to the lot of the many, Arnason gives us a main group of stories, the natural-phenomena; these are divided into three classes,—tales of animals, tales of herbs, and tales of stones.

Man being included among the animals, several curious remarks are given concerning him.

For instance: A child that is born with two teeth (in the upper jaw) will afterwards become a poet. These teeth are called "Skálda-gemlur," "scald-teeth." Again, if a man can reach with his tongue up to his nose, it is another sign that he will be a poet. A saying is common, that a short hand and a thief go together, as also a long hand and a lying tongue; but a thief is also called "fingra-langr," long-fingered. If one can bend easily the fingers far back, he will be a clever smith; or, if a woman, she will be an able sempstress. These fingers are called smith-fingers and seam-fingers. Tall growth and slothful disposition go together, therefore the saying also goes: "Better is good luck than long bones." A large forehead tells of a bountiful mind; quick eyes, of woman-love; blue ones, of blithe spirits; thin nose, of stinginess; eyes near together, of niggardliness; bristly hair, of ill temper; soft hair, of gentle mind. If the veins on the back of your hand form a letter, this letter shews the initial of your future wife's or husband's Christian name.

But it is of the lower animals that tales are particularly numerous.

The bear was originally a changeling, or a human being compelled by a curse to assume that form. The she bear brings forth her young in full human shape, and they continue thus until she throws her paw over them, when they at once assume the bear's shape, which they wear for ever. In Grímsey, an island north of Iceland, much exposed to visits from bears upon the Greenland ice-floes, the knowledge of bears is much developed. There, it once happened that a man caught a bear's cub before the mother had thrown her paw over it. This cub was no other than a little girl. The man took her home with him and fostered her, and she grew into a very handsome and hopeful damsel; but at this period she was troubled with an everlasting wish to plunge into water, and especially into the sea. One day she managed to get out to the ice that surrounded the shore. No sooner was she there, than her mother came up, and throwing her paw over her, changed her into a bear.

Bears very often shew quite human skill, and the most wonderful good nature. (See, in the Appendix, the Story of the Grímsey Man and the Bear.) It is as well to avoid teasing or bating bears, for they are sure to take vengeance. Stories are current illustrating this fact.

When a bear is killed, one must take good care not to behave in any way meanly towards the dying animal. When he has received his death-blow, he lies down quietly and licks his gaping wounds; and if, after this, the hunter takes the dastardly advantage of giving him a further blow, the man's life is from that moment doomed. If a bear, after receiving his death-wound, roar once or more than once, it is to call upon his relatives to take vengeance upon his slayer; and the next year there will come as many bears to the place as roars were uttered. It is an excellent thing to spread the skin of a bear under a child as it is born, for all infants received on that fur obtain thus the "bear's-warmth,"[1] or, in other words, become so warm-blooded that they never feel cold.

Concerning cows, there is a superstition that they speak on New Year's night; others say, on the night of Epiphany; and others say, on midsummer night. Their language is wondrous laconic, and drives every one mad who listens to it.

It is told that a man was in a cow-house on New Year's night, in order to hear the cows speak. The first cow opened her mouth and said, "Time to speak." The second answered, "Man in cow-house." "Drive him mad," said the third. And the fourth said, "Yea, ere light comes." This and no more could the man relate next morning, for the cows had driven him mad.

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[1] Hávarðar Saga Isfirðings, p. 1.

A singular sexual intercourse occurs between she-cats and he-foxes, the birth resulting from this union being the fearful monsters called Skoffín, Skuggabaldr, and Urðarköttr, the which are so awful, that no living being can endure the sight of them, but withers away to death thereat. The urðarköttr preys, in churchyards, upon dead bodies only.[1] Some say that the skuggabaldr is dangerous only to sheep, as that monster has a fox for a mother, and is consequently born with a natural taste for mutton. Elsewhere we are told that the skoffín is a monster that is born from a cock's egg: for cocks *do* lay an egg when they are extremely old. Should this egg be hatched, the skoffín is the result.

Nothing can kill these creatures save the sight of their own or one another's hideousness, which is so terrible and appalling as to act in the manner of Medusa's head. It is possible, however, to shoot them with a silver button, but the mark of the Cross must be made before the gun be fired.

There is yet another monster, offspring of cat and fox, called finngálkn, which, though harmful, does not appear in such diabolic style as the three just mentioned. It can only be shot with silver, but can hardly be brought within range, save by the aid of honey, of which, as of other sweets, it is very fond.

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[1] Compare with this the eastern Ghoul.

Popular fancy, having largely dealt in quadrupeds and their doings, turns to birds, those great travellers, who have seen much, who say much, who know more, and who are acquainted with the future fate of man.

One sufficiently safe way of acquiring a knowledge of the language of birds is recorded. Take the tongue of a hawk, and put it in honey for two days and three nights; place it then under your own tongue, and you will understand the language of birds. It must not, however, be carried elsewhere than under the tongue, for the hawk is a poisonous bird.

Chief among fowls of the air, the eagle is the hero of various superstitions. It is the custom of this "king of birds," as the Icelanders call him, to sit on the banks of rivers and brooks, in order to watch for by-passing salmon. When a fish swims by, the bird, clinging with one claw to the sward, seizes with the other the back of his prey into which he digs his claws. Should, however, the salmon weigh more than ten pounds, it is too unwieldy for the bird, and the struggle is severe. Should a man now pass by, he will act foully if he aid not the eagle; should he slay the eagle in these straits, he will be luckless for the rest of his life. Some eagles have the upper bill grown so crooked that the use both of it and of the lower is a matter of difficulty; to hinder or harm such a bird, for in this state it is as tame as a dove, is misfortune; to help it is sure prosperity and luck in the days to come.

If you put gold into an eagle's nest, when she has laid her eggs, from one egg will be hatched the stone called "lausnar-steinn" (release-stone); but from the other a flying dragon.

Should you wish to bewilder a man's sight,—Take a feather from an eagle's left wing, and place it under his pillow, or the cushion he sits on.

If babies suck their milk through an eagle's quill, they will obtain a sure and profound memory.

If an eagle's claw be used as a handle to the pulley of a blacksmith's furnace-bellows, the smithy will never be burnt down.

If you desire to insure against all possibility of loss of a precious thing, cut off an eagle's claw at the joint, and let the blood trickle into a cup of clay or glass. In this blood you must dip a release-stone which has lost nothing of its nature, and which, blood-dripping, you must thrust into a bottle and pour upon it holy wine. The bottle must stand untouched for seven weeks, at the end of which period it may be opened, at the hour corresponding to that at which it was corked. Then you must take a feather, and, having dipped it into the bottle, lay it either under or over the object you wish to preserve. This never fails. The object will never be lost.

One of the birds most remarkable for knowledge of hidden things is the Icelandic raven, and he is often mentioned in the traditions of the country. It is probable that the mythic tradition of the knowledge of Odin's ravens—Huginn and Muninn, who flew all the world over and brought their master news from every quarter, gave rise to the more modern belief in raven-knowledge. These birds hold, every year, two great meetings, one in spring, the other in autumn. These meetings are held in every parish, and thereunto come all the ravens therein; this is, at least, sure as regards the autumn assembly. At these meetings, matters of general importance are discussed. Folk say that at their spring assembly these birds discuss plans for their subsistence during the summer; but at their autumnal meeting they chiefly discuss how they shall pair off to every farm in Iceland, for the winter. If it so happen that, at the end of the meeting, one odd raven be left, all the rest fall upon him and slay him *unguibus et rostro.* Such are the poor-law provisions of the Icelandic ravens.

The two ravens that frequent each farm during the winter are very orderly, and watch carefully for all refuse and out-sweepings of the house. They leave the farm every evening when dusk falls, and return thither in the morning at sunrise. These ravens are called home or farm ravens.

If the croakings of ravens be heard at night, some great event is impending. This croaking proceeds not from natural birds, but from "night ravens," which are unclean spirits or "followers" of some kind.

As all birds' notes, so also the croakings of ravens, have their meaning. Raven language is a richer one than that of most Icelandic birds. In order to understand the language of ravens, it is necessary to take a living raven, and, cutting him open, to take out his heart. If the bird can move or fly two feet distance after this operation, the possessor of its heart will be able to understand raven language. He must keep the heart under his tongue while he listens to the black speaker, but must, at other times, keep it in a box which has never before held anything. Although everybody is not able to understand the language of this bird, everybody can at least mark the different signs in its attitude and behaviour.

If, when one leaves home, a raven fly with one, deviating to the right from one's path, good luck and a prosperous journey are betokened. Should the bird fly towards one, soaring high into the air, an unprosperous ending to one's journey is betokened, and a return home is the best course to take.

If a raven sit on the top of a church, or upon the beams of a farmhouse door, and, turning his tail towards him who sees him, flutter his feathers, flap his wings, and stretch his head unnaturally, he foretells the death of some well-known person in the quarter to which his bill is pointed.

If a raven come flying over the houses of a farm and perch upon the heap of sweepings in front of them, or upon the beams that stretch from the eaves on either side of the door, croaking long and loud, one may expect the death either of common people or of some of one's acquaintances.

When a raven jumps about upon inhabited houses, and croaks with a changing voice, and nods his head, and bends his neck, and ruffles his feathers, and flaps his wings, he fortells to the inmates near approaching sea distress.

If many ravens fly together one against the other, with croaking and screaming, they shew that death has happened in that quarter to which they turn in settling.

There are many curious examples of the manner in which a raven rewards those who treat him well. It is also an Icelandic saying, that "God pays for the raven," when that bird is generously treated to whatever he calls for; and Arnason gives one story, out of many that are current in the country, in support of this.[1]

Many other birds hold places in the popular fancy. We have quoted in our Appendix a story of the Ptarmigans and the Virgin Mary.

In this group of what we may call natural history stories Arnason has given some very curious things concerning whales and other dwellers in the waters. Of course, the popular fancy has chiefly to do with such whales as are harmful, not, for the most part, demoniacally evil like other water monsters that we have before mentioned, but of a naturally vicious temper. The Icelanders divide all whales into two classes, that of evil, and that of good whales. The latter, they say, are those which blow and spout high into the air, the former those whose breathing is little or not at all perceptible. These two kinds of whales are in constant warfare one with the other; the first doing all in its power to injure men, the second striving its utmost to protect them. The good whales we believe to be only of one family—the *Balæna musculus.* The evil ones have different names amongst the people, and are mostly called after such land animals as they appear to resemble in some way or other. Thus: ox-whale, because it roars like an ox; ling-back, because its back appears to be grown over with ling or heather. The sword-whale is one which has a sharp, bony fin growing from the midst of its back, and is very dangerous. Not so much so, however, as the red-mane, concerning which Arnason knows no stories. We remember having seen a book of popular natural history in the east part of Iceland, written in legendary fashion, wherein the red-mane whale was mentioned as being the "worst creature in the sea." This whale has so mad a thirst for human blood, that he can never slake it save with that of a crew of seven brothers, the which, however, proves his bane. Then there is the corpse-whale (in Icelandic, Náhvalr,—narwal, monodon). We have heard told about this whale, that it is never seen above the surface of the sea, save when it forbodes great destruction of human life by storm and shipwreck.

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[1] See "The Raven of Skiðastaðir."

When a man is attacked by any of these evil whales, and defended from them by one of the well-disposed ones, he must look upon it as a great blessing and sign of good luck. But if the defender meet with any annoyance or hurt from the man he has helped, the latter has committed the meanest and basest of actions, and calls down upon himself the vengeance of heaven.

There was once a man who, being in his boat at sea, was set upon vehemently by a shoal of evil whales, and was just brought into deadly straits, when a good whale, seeing his peril, swam up and defended him to the very shore with such vigour that at last, from weariness, it spouted blood. When the man was out of danger, he took up a stone and flung into the breathing-hole of the whale that had defended him, so that the poor creature was suffocated and died. From that moment the man's every step was a calamity for him, and he died eventually under the weight of general hatred and contempt. This story, though current in the east of Iceland, we do not find in Arnason's work. He has given a story of the seal closely resembling one we have before given, after Jón the Learned. Then come various tales of poisonous fishes, and of fishes which render him who catches them lucky and happy. But we find nowhere in his volumes tales of the "Karfi," the red-fish, which was as red as blood. The days were numbered of him who drew it up from the sea. The same thing is said to be the case with the trout, if it be caught in the sea with a hook; and Icelandic seamen believe the same even to this day.

Amongst these water beings are three of peculiar interest which belong only to a certain river in Iceland, the Lagarfljót in the east, the deepest and widest river in the whole country. These beings are a worm or serpent, a seal, and a skate. Of the first the following story is told:—A woman living on the banks of the Lagarfljót once gave her daughter a gold ring; the girl would fain see herself in possession of more gold than this one ring, and asked her mother how she could turn the ornament to the best account. The other answered, "Put it under a heath-worm." This the damsel forthwith did, placing both worm and ring in her linen-basket, and keeping them there some days. But when she looked at the worm next, she found him so wonderfully grown and swollen out, that her basket was beginning to split to pieces. This frightened her so much that, catching up the basket, worm and ring, she flung them all into the river. After a long time this worm waxed wondrous large, and began to kill men and beasts that forded the river. Sometimes he stretched his head up on to the bank, and spouted forth a filthy and deadly poison from his mouth. No one knew how to put a stop to this calamity, until at last two Finns[1] were induced to try to slay the snake. They flung themselves into the water, but soon came forth again, declaring that they had here a mighty fiend tc deal with, and that neither could they kill the snake nor get the gold, for under the latter was a second monster twice as hard to vanquish as the first. But they contrived, however, to bind the snake with two fetters, one behind his breast-fin, the other at his tail; therefore the monster has no further power to do harm to man or beast; but it sometimes happens that he stretches his curved body above the water, which is always a sign of some coming distress, hunger, or hard times.

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[1] This is, among other points, a proof that this is an echo of an ancient tale, as in the Icelandic mythology and sagas Finns are regarded as great sorcerers.

This story is pretty clearly a corruption of the Northern myth of the two suns of Loki and the ogress Angurboða Fenrisúlfr, and Miðgards Ormr (world-surrounding serpent),[1] mixed with that of Fofnir, the monster resting on the great heaps of gold in Gnítaheiði.

Concerning the skate, tales say that he is so poisonous that he proves the death of him who touches him, even with one finger only. A power-poet has now bound this monster so effectually that it can do no further harm to anybody.

The dangerous seal which haunted this river Lagarfljót has likewise been bound for ever, by a power-poet, to a rock beneath a waterfall in it, and thus is harmful no longer.

Of the trees and herbs that grow in the country tales are very plentiful, the most beautiful among which is that of the sorb-trees. We omitted this story from our First Volume for reasons stated in the Preface, but have, on second thoughts, taken it up into the Appendix of our present Series.

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[1] See Snorra Edda; Reykjavik, 1848, pp. 18—20.

The belief in the sacredness of the sorb or service-tree is in all probability very ancient. It is called "Thor's rescue" in the Edda, because he had a rod of its wood in his hand when he waded over the river Vimur to Geirrödargðar.[1] In the heathen times of Iceland, folk often saw in groves of these trees (which exist there no longer in any great number) burning lights. These were awful to pagan eyes, and Christian churches were without fail erected where such had been seen. This tree is also called a holy tree, because in days of old a sorb-tree was found, one Christmas-eve, with blazing lights in all of its branches, which a tempestuous wind could not put out. If you search for a shoot of this tree, with a view to rooting it up, you will never find it, although the place where it grows be perfectly well known to you. If, however, another purpose lead you to the spot you will easily find the shoot. If this wood be used for fuel, it renders those that sit round its fire bitter foes, albeit, up to that time they have been the best of friends. Because the sorb-tree wood is thus unfit for use, the saying has in late times sprung up, that it is accursed; and, doubtless, for this reason it was allowed to grow up as best it could, and exempted from the havoc made among the other woods, particularly that of the birch. If sorb-wood be used for shipbuilding, the luckless bark constructed thereof will certainly sink in the launching, save some part of it, the railing particularly, be made of the juniper tree. These two woods are deadly foes; one will try to drag the vessel down into the deep, the other to raise it up into the heavens. With one wood for the keel, and the other for the railing, the due balance is, however, kept. If both woods lie in the same house, it will be burnt down. If a horse be loaded on one side with sorb-wood and on the other with juniper-wood, the loads will never balance one another. All this shews clearly what antipathy exists between them.

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[1] Snorra Edda, I., pp. 286—288.

To other kinds of woods various superstitions are attached. The sallow, for instance, is of a baneful nature. If this wood be in a house where lies a dying man, he cannot expire until it has been removed. Neither can women be delivered of their children nor beasts of their young, while this wood is in the house or the shed. It must be cut with no edged instrument, knife, or axe, for such tools will glance from the wood, and deal him who wields them a wound from which he will with difficulty recover. This last fancy has arisen, doubtless, from the story of the death of Grettir, who was fatally wounded by cutting into the root of this tree, sent to the island whereon he lived an outlaw, the which tree was bedevilled by a certain sorceress.[1]

We must not omit to mention the so-called thieve's-root, a plant with a white blossom. It springs only where a thief has been hanged, and out of the death-froth that has fallen from his agonized lips to the ground. The root of this plant is extremely fibrous. When it is dug up the earth must be carefully removed from all the fibres, not one of them being broken, but the straight body of the root must be torn swiftly up. When such root is broken, it breaks with so loud a sound that every creature that hears it falls dead on the spot. When, therefore, those who wish to possess this root tear it up from the earth, they previously stuff their ears with wool, and, for further safety, attach one end of a string to the root and the other to a dog which they call towards them in moving from the place. The dog pulls, the root breaks, and the dog dies in a spasm. One is strongly reminded of the mandrakes by this ceremony.[2]

This thieve's-root has the power of attracting to it money and treasures that have been buried in the earth, provided, however, that a coin be stolen from a poor widow, between the First and Second Lesson, on one of the great Festival Days,—Yule, New Year, or Whitsuntide.

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[1] See Gret. Saga, Copenhagen, 1853, ch. 81–83, pp. 177–181.

[2] See Josephus: War against the Romans, Book VII., ch. xxiii., where he treats of a root used for exorcism of devils.

"Lock-grass" is endowed with the power of unlocking every lock. This property has been thus discovered. A door, carefully locked and soundly hinged in its frame, was so placed before the opening of a wag-tail's nest, in which there were no eggs, that the bird could by no means enter its home. The wag-tail flew away, and forthwith returned with a bunch of this grass, which opened the opposing door, if not better, at any rate quicker than the best locksmith in the world. Should a man force the wag-tail to discover this grass for him, he must never after be bare-headed, for the bird will pursue him everywhere, watching for an opportunity of dropping a poisonous worm on to his head, and so killing him.

Besides these, there is the wedlock-grass, which inspires love between man and woman. Its root is divided into into two fibres, one of which must touch the youth and the other the maiden. Then comes Freyás-grass, which, if steeped in water for three nights, and placed under your pillow, will tell you who has stolen from you. Then the brook ranunculus (or crow-foot), which, if taken while the sun is *in signo Leonis*, and washed in lamb's blood, and wrapped up with a wolf's tooth in laurel leaves, will prevent any one from speaking harshly to you, and which, if put to your eye, will show you not only the person but the actions of one who has stolen from you.

Concerning stones, there are in Iceland many superstitions; and, indeed, mineralogy is far richer in legends than botany.

There are in Iceland certain places, such as Drápuhlíðarfjall, in the district of Snœfellsnes (Snœfellsnes Sýsla), Kofri, a mountain peak in the district of Isafjörðr (Isafjaðar Sýsla), and Tindastoll on Reyjkjaströnd, a mountain-pinnacle on the west side of Skagafjörðr, in the north of the island, where there are rifts in the hill, filled with water. Round these pools magically endowed stones may be gathered. They may even be picked from the surface of the water itself on midsummer night, when they play about upon it like feathers upon a windy pond. But access to them, even to the rift of Kofri, is exceedingly difficult, and cannot be accomplished without the magic bridle or wolf's-ride.

We may first mention the "Release-stone" (lansnarsteinn), which ensures a safe delivery to any woman in child-bed better than the most experienced midwife. There is some difficulty in finding and getting hold of this stone. He who wishes to do so, must go to the nest of an eagle, and muzzle the young ones before they can fly. This must be done on the night of St. Vitus' Mass (15th of June). When the mother-eagle returns to her nest and finds her offspring in these straits, she does all she can to get off the muzzle or band that is upon them, and, with this view, brings all sorts of magic stones into the nest. Finally, she fetches the release-stone, and the bands at once drop off the heads of the young birds. But he who wishes to possess the stone must be close at hand, so as to snatch it out of the nest before the mother eagle seize it and drop it into a forty fathom sea.

Another no less remarkable stone is the "Hid-helmet," of which there are many tales, and to which there are many allusions both in Northern and German mythology. This stone has the power of rendering its possessor invisible, while he himself can see and hear all that passes around him. It must be kept in the right armpit while not in use, but in the palm of the left hand when it is desired to act. If you wish to obtain this stone act as follows. Take the new-laid egg of a raven, boil it, and restore it yet warm to the nest. If the raven perceive not what has been done to her egg, she will sit on it as on the others, but, finding she cannot hatch it, will remove it, if you do not anticipate her. If this egg be taken away from the nest when the raven is tired of sitting on it, and before she removes it, you will find within it something like a stone, and this is the magic hid-helmet. But you must observe one thing in all this, when the egg has been boiled the raven will fly away to an island in the Red Sea, and fetch thence another wonder-working stone, which will render the egg raw again, so frustrating your plans. You must, of course, take beforehand every precaution against this. Some recommend other methods for procuring this stone, but this is generally looked upon as the best.

Then comes the "Wish-stone," so called because every wish of its possessor will be fulfilled. This stone may be found on the beach when the tide is half in, the moon nineteen days old, and the sun in the south. It must be sought for on Easter morning (it is of yellowish white tint), and borne under the tongue while the wish is expressed.

The "Tale-stone" is found in the nest of the wagtail, in May. It must he carried always in a neckcloth wet with blood, and placed, when its owner wishes for information on any point, in his right ear, where it will tell him all he would know.

The "Life-stone" is well known from very ancient times.[1] In quickens what is dead, revives what is dying, lengthens life, and is the most healing medicine for wounds. It must be worn under the skin of the right armpit, the incision in which made for its reception it will instantly cure. It may also be worn in a gold ring, on the third finger. You may procure the stone thus: Kill all the young birds in a raven's nest and fling them away, save one, which bind to the nest, with its mouth propped wide open by a little piece of wood. The mother raven finding things in this state will fetch a certain stone, with which she will revive the poor little wretch left to her. After two or three days, visit the nest, and you will find the young bird quite alive, with a small red stone in its bill. Take this stone,—it is the life-stone,—but restore the bird to its mother, The same stone may be found where a thunderbolt has torn up the earth. It is related of a man who had a life-stone in his armpit, that he was shipwrecked. The whole crew of the ship was lost, he as well as the rest, and several years went by, bringing mourning, consolation, and forgetfulness. At the end of this time the man was driven up on a beach where many people were standing. He prayed them to open his right armpit. They did so; the stone fell out, and there lay before them on the shingle a little heap of jelly.

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[1] See Kormak's Saga, ch. ix., p. 80; ch. xii., pp. 116–118.

Although it may seem, perhaps, out of place, we would call attention here to the superstition of the life-egg, of which, in connexion with trolls, certain tales make mention. In so close connexion with the life of its owner does this egg stand, that his existence depends absolutely upon its integrity.

Then, again, there is the "Stefnir," "which," as Salomon amongst others informs us, "must be hung over the place whence evil is to be averted, and which must be sought for on midsummer night." It has nine properties or powers. But the agate is yet richer, for it is said to have twenty-four; it is not, however, known what these are.

To aërial phenomena are various superstitions attached.

One who can contrive to get under one end of a rainbow may obtain whatever he desires. When fiery spheres are seen in the air they are called war-globes, because they betoken warfare and bloodshed. If these appear in a lengthened, oval, or oblong shape they are called war-brands, and are ominous in the same manner. When a large ring is seen round the moon it foretells the coming of a storm, the more violent the larger the ring is. If a crescent moon seem to turn its horns earthward and its circle towards the zenith, some ship or boat will be wrecked in that moon. If the moon glow an unwonted crimson, it is stained by the blood soon to be shed in battle. The face of the moon, whose features can be sufficiently well distinguished, represents that of Adam; the dazzling countenance of the sun, that of Eve his wife. An odd superstition is attached to the first new moon seen after the beginning of summer. Should you see it, go into company, and, without saying a word on the subject, pay great attention to the first words that are addressed to you, for they are prophetical. There is some little difficulty, however, in properly interpreting them. For instance, if the first words you hear are "Good-night!" your days are numbered. A maiden once entered the house after having seen this first summer new moon, and would sit down on a chest that stood in the family-room. "Take heed," said another girl to her, "it rocks;" and later on in the summer the maiden's betrothed forsook her, throwing up his engagement.

Concerning the sea the following will, we believe, interest our readers. There is a common and true saying, which holds good mostly on wave-tormented shores where boat landings are, that three great billows always follow one another in unbroken succession. These three are called by the name "Ólag," that is, high surf that hinders landing.

The lapse of time, and the smaller waves between these three vast billows and the next three, are called "Lag," that is, fit time and sea for landing. When one lands, he must urge his boat shorewards swiftly after the last wave of the "ólag," and row a life-rowing with might and main. On this exact choice of sea and time depends the life of fishermen in the south and south-east of the country, as well as in some other parts. In the "lag" there are three successive waves, far smaller than those of the "ólag." When a boat has "taken the lag" either too late or too early, and is overtaken by the "ólag," it is, in most cases, irretrievably lost. When such a wreck happens, it is said that a great calm steals over the deep, and this desolation of stillness is called "Dauðalag," death's-calm. While this prevails, and the sea seems content with its prey, other boats can land safely, and it is said of them, "They land in the death-calm of those who are drowned." "Násjóir," death-breakers, are sometimes seen when people are at sea, and are known by a tint which is either bluer or redder than that of the surrounding waters. "Náöldur," death-billows, are also known, the plash of one of which against another, as they near the shore, produces a thunderous noise called the "death-clash." This sound foretells shipwreck. The death-scream at sea (altogether different from that which we have mentioned as being heard in burial-grounds), is supposed by some to rise from the "násjóir," and is a wild, wailing, awful cry, like that of a man in his death-agony.

Concerning the proper names of various places Arnason has related sundry tales which are of high interest to the Icelanders themselves, and to those who study the topography of Iceland. In the story of Dwarf-stone, before mentioned, we have a legendary account of the origin of a name of this kind. It may be here remarked that, both in the Landnámabók of Iceland and in the Sagas, the names of many farms, mountains, districts, gulfs, &c. (of which names the origin is clearly known), are given. Yet the topographical history of the country would be not a little enriched if a complete collection of these tales could be made. The few in Arnason's book represent but meanly the vast mass of such as are current among the people.

In the fifth group of tales Arnason has classed *Legends*, in the narrower sense of the word, that is, stories which touch upon religious and ecclesiastical matters. Among these are many which illustrate the spite of the devil against God and God's best deeds and loveliest creations, a spite which invariably falls redoubled upon the evil one's own head. Some of these tales will be found in our selection. In several of these legends St. Peter has a prominent rôle, a fact which fixes the date of them distinctly in Catholic times. Some stories, however, in which this first of apostles and saints plays a rather absurd part, were most probably written after the middle of the 16th century, when Lutheranized souls were much disposed to make merry at the expense of the popedom, its origin, and its supports.

The tales we have selected of this kind bear a stamp of wit and originality which, if left in the original language, would be lost to many readers who will now be able to appreciate them. None, we feel confident, will be the worse for reading them. On the other hand, many tales in this group shew a profound horror of every kind of irreligion; dancing in churches on Yule night is fearfully punished,—fane and dancers, musicians and singers, being dragged down by the devil into the abyss, in the midst of their sacrilegious revelry. In other tales it is shewn how eager Satan is to possess himself of human souls. He visits mothers in dreams, begging them to give his name to their child at its baptism, and scarcely ever has the child failed to become a devil's fellow, a son of Belial when he grew up. Exorcism was naturally resorted to, for the purpose of destroying the influence of the evil one in these cases. We have given a story of the clumsy latinity of a priest in that ceremony.[1]

In legends of saints the Icelandic folk-lore is poor; prosy nonsense of that descriptions born in the bigoted brains of the monks, and committed by them to countless reams of dingy vellum, failed to charm the spirit of a people whose imagination, as warm as that of Oriental nations, was far too clear to spend its poetical wealth upon twaddle such as the monks wished to force upon it as truth. Those clear northern heads saw the baseness of one half of the saint-legends, and spurned the unimaginativeness and false morality of the other. In the middle ages, it is true, the Virgin Mary was, both by clergy and by laity, devoutly adored ; but she is almost the only one who ever became a popular saint.

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[1] See the present Series, p. 33. In Germany there is a similar story of awkward exorcism. The priest begins, "Exi tu ex corpo." The devil answers, "Nolvo." The priest asks, "Cur tu nolvis?" The devil replies, "Quia tu male linguis." Then says the priest, with a dignified air, "Hoc est aliud rem," and walks off majestically.

There were current, of course, many tales concerning the bishops of Hólar and Skálholt, who were, after their death, made saints, and whose spirits, and bones, and robes wrought many wonderful cures. These superstitions have, however, completely passed away from among the people, the only remains that we now find of the old belief being the wells or springs which Gudmundr the Good, bishop of Hólar, in the beginning of the 13th century, consecrated, and the water of which was thought wonderfully wholesome. Whether proper names that are compounded with the abbreviated name of this bishop do, in fact, bear any real reference to him, we are not competent to tell, as in most cases the legend is lost, the bare name only remaining. But Gvendarnes, Gvendarskarð (the ness and pass of Gudmundr), Gvendarber (Gudmundr's-berry — *equisetum arvense*), and Gvendargrös (Gudmundr's-grass—*fucus* *crispus*), are, however, in all probability, called after the bishop. Some native saints, too, have certain days dedicated to them in the Icelandic almanac.

Tales concerning such personages as the Three Sages from the East and the holy Witus are not of Icelandic origin, although they have been taken up into Arnason's collection (II., pp. 25—32).

It may be easily credited that the judgments of God are much believed in by the fanciful Icelanders, who consider that the wrong which a man has done in this life with impunity will not fail to be duly punished hereafter, and who look upon any calamity that befalls an impious man who has set civil and divine laws at defiance as the direct interference of Providence. There are several stories in Arnason's collection illustrating this belief. We have chosen that of the Raven of Skiðastaðir, as being not only to the point, but interesting from its details of the raven's sagacity and gratitude.

Arnason has given (II., pp. 47—52) a variation of the well-known legend of the Wandering Jew, and an account of the various plagues that come yearly upon the descendants of the twelve tribes of the Jews who "nailed our Lord on the Cross," both of which are, of course, of foreign origin.

All that Arnason has been able to collect from Roman Catholic times belonging to the group of the *Legendæ* is almost entirely limited to silly prayers. Very curious, however, is the "Heaven letter," which

Christ himself is said to have written, and sent the archangel Michael to publish in Germany. This obtained an extensive belief among the Icelanders, and one farmer, well to do, and still living (to the best of our knowledge), was never without it, but wore it continually on his breast day and night. This letter was first seen in Michaelsburg, not far from Freiburg, hanging down from heaven, held by no visible hand or string. It was written in letters of gold, and is said to have been brought into Iceland in 1648, to aid in the propagation of the Catholic faith,[1] now ousted completely from its dominion there by the victorious Lutheran principles. For curiosity's sake, we give here the letter *in toto.*

"O, children, see this letter and consider it well, which is published and spread abroad through the angel Michael. Whosoever will pursue his work on the Sabbath for lucre and wealth he is accursed (or "banned,"—the Popish formula "*anathema esto*"). I forbid you who would be children of God to do any manner of work on the Sabbath in my name, either bodily or for the covetousness of riches. Slander not one another with your tongue. Squander not your riches needlessly for sins and in bad and abominable living. Deceive not the poor, the motherless, or your neighbour. Bear not false witness, but speak truth one to the other, and be ye as brethren in your private conversation. But whosoever hath not this faith he is damned, and his soul is lost for ever. And whosoever believeth not in this letter is truly a son of destruction, and hath no luck nor blessing in store for him. And I tell you, brethren, that I myself, Jesus Christ, have written it with mine own Divine hand, and have caused it to be sent abroad into the world; and whosoever contradicteth it, he is abandoned, and shall have neither aid nor mercy from me for ever; and whosoever hath this letter, and spreadeth it not abroad, he is cursed (excommunicated) from the Christian church or God's congregation, and abandoned by my Almighty hand. This letter shall ye copy, one after the other; and if ye have even committed as many sins as there be sands at the bottom of the sea, leaves on the trees, grass-blades on the earth, stars in heaven, and drops in the rain, they shall be forgiven for ever. But he who believeth not in this letter shall die, and his children, for ever. O, return to me! else must ye be tormented in hell. I shall question you on the last day, and ye shall not be able to give one word of answer to a thousand on account of your sins and trespasses. But whosoever hath this letter in his house, or beareth it with him, shall be killed neither by lightning, nor by thunder, nor by the storm-wind; he shall be guarded well against fire and against water, and shall be saved. In like manner shall every man that beareth this letter with him have glad prosperity in this world, and in the end life everlasting. O, children, keep ye these my commandments, which I have sent and manifested to you through the angel Michael. I, the true Jesus, have written this with mine own hand, at Mikilborg (Michaelsburg?) not far from Fríborg (Freiburg)."[1]

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[1] Espolin, Arbœkur Islands, V., c. 119 (Vol. VI., p. 127).

The rest of these Papal relics are confined to prayer only, amazing and almost unintelligible jumbles of Latin words, the names of apostles, of saints, and of the Virgin Mary, all so corrupted that it is often impossible to form any conception of the originals. These exist, for the most part, in worm-eaten manuscripts. Any of our readers who may interest themselves in such remains of Roman Catholicism in Iceland, we refer to Arnason's work, II., pp. 55—64.

Arnason's sixth group is that of historical traditions. These treat, more or less authentically, of events that actually took place, and differ so far from the legends in general that magic and preternatural beings and influences play a smaller rôle in them. The history of the country is the basis of these tales; but how far many of them can be relied upon for truthful, historical, biographical, or topographical records, is yet an open question; and until other records be found bearing stronger evidence, both external and internal, of authenticity, we must regard these as being of the highest interest to lovers of those branches of literature, and as being well worthy of preservation from oblivion. Many of the topographical names have their origin, not from the first settlers (or, at least, this is not mentioned in the Landnámabók of the country), but from those who came afterwards, and others relate to events that occurred in later times. Where history ceases, tradition begins; and thus those tales which relate to such names yet extant are of the highest value. We sincerely hope that Mr. Arnason, or some one of his countrymen, will subsequently collect into one mass the immense number of "proper-name tales," of which but too few have been printed, and which have hitherto been too little regarded by the students of Icelandic history and geography.

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[1] For further particulars concerning this "golden letter" see Werlauff, Symbolæ ad greogr. med. œvi. Havniæ, 1821, and Leiðarvísan, Brands Skálds in "Fjögur Gömul Kvœði." Ed. Svembjörn Egilsson, Viðeyjarklavstri, 1844, Stroph., 6—12, V., pp. 58—60. But this poem, which was written in all probability at the close of the 13th century, mentions already such a letter, written by the Lord himself in golden characters, recommending the observation of the Sabbath; thus giving it a far higher antiquity than its postscript accords to it, which postscript declares it to have been sent to Copenhagen in 1648, the same year in which, according to Espolin, as we have seen above, it was brought into Iceland.

Among these tales we find, firstly, several relating to churches, particularly the supernatural one of the Dwarf-stone, which we have before mentioned (see p. lxvii); and another, of the remarkable bell Líkabaung, in the old cathedral of Hólar, which rang of its own accord, when the corpse of Jón Arason, the last Catholic bishop of Iceland, was brought thither, after his infamous execution by the orders of the Danish king. This bell rang so furiously that, when the body of the "last free man" of the country was carried into the church, the metal cracked from top to bottom, and has never sounded over any burial ceremony since.

Some of these tales refer to the Icelandic monasteries, and give a pretty illustration of the inner life of these Catholic institutions, which, in later times of the Papal supremacy in Iceland, were so loathed for their gross immorality.[1]

The tales that relate to historical personages, such as the most renowned settlers in the country, and to chieftains from its early annals, are perhaps but of little value to its real history, but have, nevertheless, a peculiar interest of their own, as they shew how it came to pass that these heroes were, in later times, looked upon by the people as giants, or men of great stature and strength,—men, moreover, of such demoniacal power of will that, hundreds of years after their death, they could wreak evil and vengeance. If their cairns were broken open, they blinded people's eyes, and cast such enchantment on the surrounding farms that they appeared to be in flames, thus cutting short the work of both spade and pickaxe that were demolishing their tombs. The belief has been common, even until late years, that some disaster would follow and overtake him who dared to disturb these heroes in their cairns, and it is doubtless owing to this fancy that so few of them have been explored.

In some cases, the chieftain in his tomb has seized his battle-axe, and cut off the hand of the daring misdoer who rudely disturbed his repose. And so it is a pious duty to let these "free men sleep, with the freedom of the country so deplorably lost, in the sacred mould." Besides the cairns mentioned by Arnason, there are a number of others, which tradition declares to belong to the first settlers (landnámsmenn), amongst which we may mention the cairn of Dýri, in Dýrafjördr, in the west, and that of Thorsteinn Svarfadr, in the north country. In the immediate neighbourhood of Langarnes, the seat of the Icelandic bishop from 1825 to 1856, is said to be the tomb of Hallgerdor Lángbrók, the notorious and ill-famed wife of Gunnar of Hliðarendi (" Lithend," as Dasent has it), and this tradition is far from lacking probability, it being very possible that Hallgerdr died there, as Langarnes became her property after the death of her second husband.[1]

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[1] See Hist. Eccl. Isl., IV., pp. 78, 79. Espolin, Islands Árbækr, 1., p. 77.

In later times, the traditions treated of many other events besides generally historical ones, and were based, as the true history itself, upon poems and ballads contemporary with the events they relate. Thus these ballads have become *fontes traditionis,* in the same way as the older poems and the "drápur" served as *fontes historiæ* to Snorri and other historians of the country. Many of these traditions treat of events that concern private persons, particular districts, or personal and local names. Some commemorate plagues, such as that of the black death ; others, great volcanic eruptions, and the finding of people still living whose houses had been overwhelmed but not destroyed by the lava. Legends and traditions could not pass silent over the vast wildernesses of Iceland, where many luckless folk have lost their way. Then, again, robbers, both foreign and native, are treated of,—Turkish, Spanish, and English pirates, but particularly the former. The tales have good enough ground for speaking of native robbers, inasmuch as the country, mountainous and rocky, full of caves and precipices, hidden valleys and tortured wastes of lava, favours peculiarly that description of legend or tradition, and inasmuch as they have a grand precedent in the historical sagas, to which they seem to form a natural appendix or sequel. Even to this day, many caves are pointed out in the island as having formerly been dens of robbers. Some of these said robber traditions are semi-historical (a very equivocal expression, which we cannot render otherwise), as they treat of people who have really lived and moved and had their being, some of them indeed within the recollection of Icelanders who have not yet gone down into the grave. So these stories are a natural passage of transition to those of the outlaws, in which Icelandic literature and folk-lore are so rich, and which are doubtless for the most part as old as the laws of the country. In ancient times, grave crimes were punished by outlawry, and he upon whom this sentence was pronounced might choose for himself either absence from his country, or retirement into its wildest and most difficult wildernesses, in which latter case he had to support himself by hunting and fishing, those untrodden deserts being full of game, and scattered over with lakes innumerable. Among men law protected he could not live, for he must neither be "fed nor be ferried" (úalandi of óferjandi), and any hand might with impunity take his life. In the earliest times, probably because Iceland then boasted of considerable woods, these outlaws were called "skógar-menn," woodmen, or bushmen, and outlawry itself went by the name of "skóggangr," bush-ganging; the crime and the suit were called "skóggangssök." Later on, the word "útilegumaðr," outlaw, came into use; "skóggangr," yielded to "útilega," outlawry; and "skógmaðr" to "útilegumaðr," the expressions being, however, really synonymous. It is a fact, that outlaws led formerly a decidedly criminal and scampish life in the wildernesses of the inner country. They were notorious for their gigantic strength, their tremendous speed in running, their supple dexterity in wrestlings and bodily struggles of all kinds, and not less for their bloodthirsty character and hatred of the peaceful dwellers in cultivated, law-protected valleys, and of the whole society of those who were not under the same ban as themselves. The extraordinary firmness of the belief in outlaws up to the present day is curiously illustrated by a recent dispute, of great interest on this point, in two Icelandic journals, between Björn Gunlögsson, ex-tutor of Reykjavik college, and an Icelander somewhere in the north country, a peasant who shews firmly enough his unimpaired belief in the existence of these men, albeit no outlaw of any account has existed, to the best of our knowledge, since the beginning of this century. So deeply, too, is this belief rooted in the minds of the people, that we have actually known of people of one district meeting those of another in the wilderness, and being seized with such a panic as to flee homewards for dear life, crying "Spare me, spare me!" at the top of their voices, mistaking one another for outlaws, and wishing they had a hundred legs apiece to run with. The freshness of this old belief is wonderful. Several places are named as being the particular haunts of outlaws, and many shew by their names that they have actually been the resorts of such folk; let us mention, for instance, the Ódáðahraun, or "lava of misdeeds."

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[1] See Njála, ch. XIII., XIV., XVII.

Bloodthirstiness and dangerous brutality are by no means the only qualities of the outlaws; they are often men of high and scrupulous good faith and honour, as more than one of the stories we have selected will prove. Thus, when an outlaw has given his promise, or has received some kindness, he will seldom, if ever, prove ungrateful or break his word. Their gratitude and their vengeance seem to be about equally extravagant. Being mountaineers, leading a roving life, exposed to fatigue, exposing themselves to all climates, and breathing the pure air of the hills, they are men of noble stature and appearance, with constitutions of steel. Their mental capacities are little dwelt upon, as they have no occasion for shewing their strength in the fields of literature. In one art, however, they are particularly skilled,—in that of magic. They have great power over fogs and snowstorms, with which they can, at will, beset the path of herdsmen or maidens for whom they have conceived an attachment, causing them to wander astray in the very direction desired. They can wield also, where love is their object, the weapons of illness, sleep, and dreams. When outlaws succeed in stealing women from the farms in the peopled districts, the latter, untouched by the earnestness of their adoring but criminal lovers, loathe connexion with them, repulse their embraces, scorn their proffers, and sigh for affections purer and far away.

Often these outlaws seem to have a perfectly organized social life. They have their own magistrates and priests. Services are performed in their churches every Sabbath; prayers are read and hymns are sung in their family circles,—just as in the valleys below, peopled with folk who read prayers to God before they leave home for their daily work, and before they go to rest when the day's business is over.

We have made a considerable selection from these stories, feeling sure that our readers (albeit the commencements of several of these tales resemble one another in such details as the coming on of storms and fogs, and the losing of paths,) will find, in each instance, some new light thrown upon the strange life led in the remote wildernesses of the inner country.

The "Tales," properly so called, constitute the larger portion of our present selection, and are, in many respects, peculiar. They may be divided into two classes; the one in which a step-mother plays a prominent part, and the other miscellaneous.

The first class deals with royalty married, bereaved, disconsolate, and duped. A king loses his wife (who leaves him several children), is inconsolable, and neglects the affairs of his realm. He is led, by various circumstances, within the influence of some odious troll, who, under the appearance of persecuted innocence and outraged beauty, wins his widowed affections, and usurps the management of his kingdom. Before the marriage she is all sweetness and interesting melancholy; after it, her true character appears, in acts of tyranny, cannibalism (always well concealed), and the like. She conceives, as a matter of course, a deadly hatred for her step-children, and, inducing the king—too easy to her persuasion—to make himself scarce, proceeds to work her diabolical spells upon the poor princes and princesses, who have not been polite enough to conceal their instinctive dislike for their father's second wife. Her Majesty's own trollish appetites and propensities, or the sagacity or courage of the persecuted royal children, or the intervention of some "Deus ex machinâ," brings affairs to a focus. The king is undeceived, the troll is destroyed, and everybody is happy ever afterwards. It is upon this framework that most of the step-mother tales are built.

Of course the incidents and circumstances vary *ad infinitum*, so that none of our readers need fear sameness. It is not for us to philosophize here upon the general moral of second marriage. The writers of these legends seem to have grasped the salient feature of *jealousy*, and to have turned it to fantastic account.

In all these tales virtue, though in straits for a while, is eventually triumphant. Arnason's work contains one story of a *good* step-mother, but so revolting are many of its details (charming as the story is as a whole), and so great the lack of delicacy, that we have omitted it from our collection.

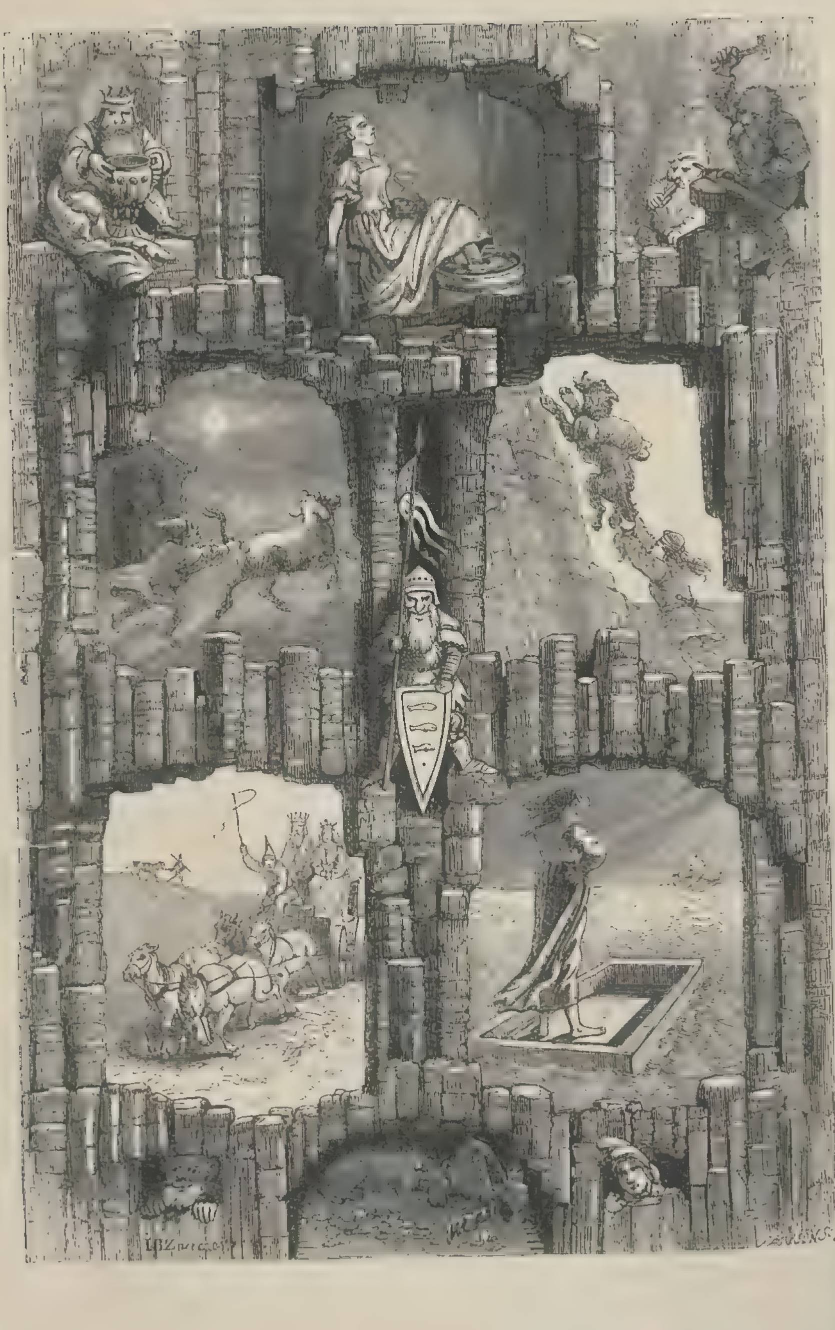
In the miscellaneous tales, or "öfintyri," royal life appears rather at a disadvantage, being more or less made game of. Intellectual superiority is given to some rustic, who, by native wit and courage, and in spite of many obstacles, climbs up the perilous steep to the throne, plants his feet upon the footstool, and, in the end, seats himself upon the cushions.

Sometimes doubt has been cast upon the nationality of these tales, Iceland never having had a king, and never having been rich in such forest trees, as these treat of. But the very treatment of royalty is sufficient index to the birth-place of the stories, so extravagant are the views entertained of kingly customs and ways of living, and so naïve the descriptions of details in royal house-keeping. And again, the Sagas and Eddas have treated quite enough of kings and queens to render the idea of such exalted personages quite a familiar one to the people. The same may be said of the forests of which old Icelandic classics treat, and which really did exist in the island, though on a scale much inferior to that of the legendary forests of mighty trees, which are mentioned in this volume.

Two stories, of whose Icelandic origin Arnason seems well convinced, we cannot consider Icelandic: "Grishildr góða,"—Grissel the Good, Patient Grissell; and "Karls Sonr og Köttrinn hans,"—The Carl's Son and his Cat.

Of what may be called "comic" stories, a considerable number,—many of them turning upon puns and the like,—exist in Iceland. Arnason has taken few of these; we have taken fewer and the best. Our readers will perceive that Gotham exists in the far north as well as in lower latitudes.

Concerning the collection of "superstitions" which conclude our selection, we can only observe that they represent very fairly what Arnason has found. We could not resist giving these superstitions at considerable length, so quaint are they, so original, and so utterly new to Englishmen. Many of them are still in force in Iceland, and many are those who would rather transgress a biblical commandment than break a superstitious rule, so strongly in the minds of Icelanders does attachment to the strange, the poetical, and the mystic preponderate over the cool tendency to clear logic.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STORIES OF GOD AND THE EVIL ONE.

LEGENDS OF ICELAND.

SECOND SERIES.

THE STEWARD OF SKALHOLT.

THERE was once a bishop at Skalholt who was extremely harsh and merciless to his stewards. Unwillingly, therefore, they lived with him, and left him dishonoured. Many wished evil to the bishop for his harshness, and prayed that the Devil himself might come to him in their stead; and at last it fell out that the bishop, being in want of a steward, was at a loss to get one.

Then came there a man to him, elderly, red-haired, and broad-shouldered, offering his services as a steward.

This offer the bishop accepted, the more gladly as he was in so great a strait.

The man had nought to say concerning his wages, but that the matter would rest till he left. Nor did he tell the bishop anything of his family and descent, nor mentioned whence he came; saying that this was of no consequence, inasmuch as all the bishop wanted to know was how he performed his duties.

He now took charge of the household concerns, and for a while it was clear that the bishop was satisfied.

In the same parish there dwelt an old peasant, an acquaintance of the bishop, skilled in the ancient arts; and the relations between this farmer and the steward soon waxed unfriendly.

Once the farmer had an interview with the bishop, in order to inform him that he strongly feared his steward would prove no gain to him at last. He asked the bishop, furthermore, wherefore he never chid the man; for that he always entered the church after the Gospel was read, and left it before the blessing was pronounced upon the people.

The bishop answered that he had never taken heed of this. But when he found that the farmer's words were true, he chid his steward, who gave back a peevish and wrathful answer, and said that he had so many things to taks care of, that it would ill suit him to lounge about in church a needlessly long while: said too, that he would have his own will as to the time he spent in church, or else would speedily take his leave.

Hereat the bishop's anger calmed down. And now for six years more did the steward continue to serve him, Nothing of note meanwhile came to pass.

But at the end of this time the steward was hated by all men, save alone the bishop; although his patience was nearly worn out by the man's violent and headstrong temper and behaviour.

In the middle of the Easter-night the old farmer, who had formerly spoken to his Reverence about his steward, came to Skalholt, and stole on the sly up to the churchyard, where he watched three men moving round about the church, of whom the steward was one. He saw that they were casting ropes and cables over the church at the command of the steward; wherefrom the farmer judged that the others were his servants. Both were ugly and rascally-looking fellows.

When they had corded the church as much as they thought fit, the farmer heard the steward say that to-morrow, when he came out of the church, they should stand one at each side of it, ready to pull the ropes, while he himself would stand at the door looking after his own rope; and by this plan they would be sure to sink the church, with all the people therein.

When the farmer saw their preparations, and knew what plot lurked in them against the bishop and his flock, he stole away alone from the churchyard, up to the house, and going into the bishop's bedroom, roused him, and told him what fate awaited him on the morrow.

This unlooked-for news put the bishop out of countenance, but the farmer deemed redelessness the worst policy in this strait. He told the bishop to watch all the rest of the night, and prepare himself for preaching the sermon the next day, minding that it were a hard one.

"But I," said the farmer, "will sit on the corner bench, and if it should happen that the steward meet with some hindrance from me as he goes out, then watch well, and pronounce at once your blessing from the pulpit, and this will, by God's grace, suffice."

Now the bishop did as the farmer bade him, and when the peal of bells told out the worship to the people the farmer went to the church, took forth his pocket-knife and cut cross-marks upon the church, in sundry places. None but himself knew wherefore he did this; but he hereby cut the ropes which the steward had girt about it in the night.

The bishop mounted the pulpit, and, after the Gospel was read, the steward entered the church. In a mighty bustle he came in, and fiendish he looked, and much struck he was that the bishop had mounted the pulpit already.

The bishop seeing him enter, preached with great force and inspiration. No man's child in the church listened to the preacher without tears; but the steward was now pale as death, and now black and gloomy as soot, and as the sermon approached its end, he jumped up, in order to go out. The farmer stood up from his corner and moved against the door, telling the steward that he had no need to hurry, and that it would be as well for him, by way of a change, to await the out-giving of the blessing. Thereat the steward became violent, and would thrust the farmer away from the door, but with no avail.

The bishop seeing what was going on, pronounced at once the blessing with uplifted hands; and, at the same moment, the steward began to sink into the earth.

Now the farmer had in his bosom the book of the Psalms of David; this he took forth, and dealt the steward a goodly blow therewith on the crown, and, at the last syllable of the benediction, the skull of the Devil-steward vanished into the ground, under the repeated psalm-thumps of the old farmer.

After this the bishop began a good sermon of thanksgiving for this manifest salvation of himself and of his flock, from the vile plot and plan of the devil; and became, thenceforth, the best of masters to his stewards.

BOAT LANGUAGE.

SOMETIMES one may hear a certain kind of cracking in boats that are in the boat-stand in calm weather. This cracking is the language of the boats, which it is not for every one to understand. But one man, on a time, understood the boat language. He came to the sea shore when two boats were standing close together, and was witness that they thus talked :—

1*st Boat* :—"Long have we been together, but to-morrow must we part company."

2*nd Boat* :—"Nay! that shall never be; we must not part. Thirty years now have we been neighbours, and have grown old; and if one is wrecked, we shall both go under."

1*st Boat* :—"Natheless, that will not be: Good weather to-night, but other weather to-morrow, and none will row out but thy master; but I shall be left behind, and also the other boats. But thou wilt go, never to return. Never more shall we stand here together."

2*nd Boat* :—"That never shall be, nor will I let myself be launched."

1*st Boat* :—"Bound thou wilt be to go down to the sea. This is the last of nights that we shall be together."

2*nd Boat* :—"Never will I let myself be launched, without thou goest down with me into the sea."

1*st Boat* :—"It is not to be avoided."

2*nd Boat* :—"Nay! without the devil himself come too."

After this the boats spoke in so low a voice, that the listener was unable to make out their secret mutterings.

Next morning the weather was very suspicious, and none deemed fit to row out, except one boat-master and his crew. Down to the sea they went, as did many who would not out-row.

"Now," said the boat-master, as wont he was, "your skin-clothes on, in Jesus' name." And the crew clothed them in their skin-clothes.

"Let us launch the boat, in Jesus' name," quoth the boat-master, as wont he was.

So they all fell to launching, but the boat was not to be moved.

The boat-master prayed the other boat-men, who stood by, to aid them; but neither was this of any avail. Now every one of the standers by had lent his aid to launch the boat, and the master said, as before, "Now, let us launch in Jesus' name;" but, in spite of all the hands at work, not an inch moved the boat.

Then cried the master loud, and said: "Hallo, there! In the name of the devil, forth with it!"

No sooner had the words been spoken than forth shot the boat into the sea, and nigh had flung itself out of the grasp of the men who launched it.

Now out, and away, went this boat with its crew; but nought has ever been seen of the boat since, nor aught been heard of its crew.

The Saviour and the Golden Plovers.

Once on a Sabbath, Christ, in company with other Jewish children, amused himself in fashioning birds out of clay.

After that the children had amused themselves awhile herewith, one of the Sadducees chanced to come up to them. He was old and very zealous, and he rebuked the children for spending their sabbath in so profane an employment. And he let it not rest at chidings alone; but went to the clay birds and broke them all, to the great grief of the children.

Now, when Christ saw this, he waved his hands over all the birds he had fashioned, and they became forthwith alive, and soared up into the heavens.

And these birds are the golden plovers, whose note "deerrin," sounds like to the Iceland word "dýrðin," namely, "glory;" for these birds sing praise to their Lord, for in that he mercifully saved them from the merciless hand of the Sadducee.

How the Devil would fain Create a Man.

The Devil would by no means be less than God, and essayed to create a man.

But he did not accomplish that essay too handily; for, instead of bearing a man's shape, forth came his creature in cat's shape, without skin.

But St. Peter pitied this miserable creature, and created for it a skin, as may be learnt from this ditty:—

The Devil began to make a man,
But only a bare cat came when he tried:
Good help gave Peter, that holy man,
For he clothed the naked cat in a hide.

Therefore the skin of a cat is the only part of that animal which is of any use to man.

THREE FISH.

ONCE Jesus Christ walked along the sea shore in company with St. Peter. Christ spat into the sea, and of his spittle the stone-grig was made.

Then spat St. Peter also into the sea, and of his spittle the she stone-grig was made. Now both these fishes are mighty good eating—the male is even a dainty.

But at a distance followed the Devil, walking along the shore, and he beheld what happened. He did not like to be least of them all, and so spat also into the sea. But out of that spittle the jelly-fish was made, useless as useless can be.

THE HADDOCK.

ONCE would the Devil catch fish from the sea, and he groped about in the water until he found a haddock. He grasped it under the breast-fin, where, since that grip, a dark blotch is to be seen, each side of the haddock; for these spots are the Evil-one's finger-prints. The haddock gave a strong spring, and slipped from the Devil's hand, and the dark stripe upon both sides of that fish shew the claw-marks of the Devil.

THE WONDERFUL QUERN.

THERE was once a very rich man who owned a great manor. He was married, and had by his wife two sons, of whom both were also married when these things came to pass. One of these brothers was rich as his father had been, and had by his wife four children. But the other was poor, living only on what his father vouchsafed him. When the father died, the brothers began to divide their inheritance. But the end of this affair was that the rich brother got the manor, and nigh all the rest of the inheritance, saying, forsooth, that his brother had well got *his* due, heretofore, in scrap after scrap, and draught after draught.

Hereafter held the rich brother the manor, and the poor one paid often a visit to him from his cottage, to ask of him (as of his parents before him), for that which he was in need of at the time. His brother was wont to grant something to him; but grumbling and snarling for ever. And thus did he keep up the wretched life of his brother, and his brother's wife.

Once the rich brother slaughtered a goodly ox, and the poor one deemed it as well to take this chance of asking his brother for a piece. But his wife kept him back from going, for, said she, he would get nought but his brother's harsh growling.

He said that, for that he cared nothing, and went to his brother's, in spite of all she could say.

He arrived first when they had dismembered the beast, and all the limbs lay on the slaughter-field; and, when he arrived, his brother was walking to and fro about the goodly carcass of his ox.

The poor brother begged him to give him enough meat for one meal of soup; "for," said he, "it is easy enough for you, now that you have so much at your hand."

The rich brother answered him harshly, said it was useless for him to go on with his begging, his ox had never been meant for his jaws.

But the poor brother still went on with his begging, till the rich one, at last, in a fit of rage, took one of the thighs of the ox, and threw it into his face, saying :—

"Go, with this thigh, to the devil!"

So the poor brother took the thigh, and went home with it.

When his wife saw him coming with his great burden she was glad, although she by no means could understand his brother's having been, this time, so kind; and forthwith she made ready to put it into the pot and boil it.

Her husband prayed her to wait for awhile, as his brother had not given him the thigh, but bidden him go to the devil himself therewith, and he was in no mind to steal this charge out of hand from the devil. He therefore bade her, moreover, give him journey-needs, and new shoes, for he would start forth with the thigh, not delaying, in order to render it to the devil.

The goodwife bade him not thus make a fool of himself, for his brother had given him the thigh, although he had expressed himself in an awkward way, being wearied by entreaties.

Her husband said that she might interpret the matter how she would, but that he was bent upon doing with the thigh as he had been bidden.

She therefore equipped her husband as best she could. The man started off with the thigh, and walked for a long time, not knowing whither to go, to be sure of finding the devil.

At last, he met on his way a man, who asked whither he was carrying his thigh on his back.

He answered that he was going with it to the devil.

Then the stranger asked if he knew where the haunts of the devil were.

The other answered No, and begged the stranger by all means to tell him the way, if he knew it.

He replied that, in truth, that way was utterly unknown to him; but he would, nevertheless, try to be of some help to the man by giving him a ball of thread, the end of which he should hold in his hand, letting the ball run before him till he came to a certain hillock. Thereupon, when the ball stopped, he should knock with the staff (which the stranger gave him likewise), and the hillock would open of itself at the knock, and he should cast the thigh into the gap, taking good heed not to be too near himself. He would then see two querns coming up into the hole, one black, and the other white; this one he should take, not heeding the other. After that he should take the ball, and let it run before him as before, and follow it with his quern.

The poor man thanked the stranger for his rede, took leave of him, and went afresh on his way. Now all fell out as the stranger had foretold. He found the hillock, opened it with the staff, and flung into the yawning rift the thigh, saying, "Take, Fiend! my brother sends you this thigh of his ox."

Then out rolled two querns, and when he had managed to catch hold of the white one, he went on his way after the ball, till he came to the spot where he had before met the stranger, who was still there. The poor man greeted him, asking him what he should do with the quern.

The other answered that he should make a strong and roomy case for it, and put it in a fit place, where it would, he said, grind of its own accord all it was bidden to grind, the only thing needed being to repeat this verse:—

Grind neither malt nor salt;
Grind in the name of the Lord.

After this they parted, when the poor man had heartily thanked the stranger for his rede and his aid.

He now came home to his wife, and told her all about his travels. He next made a strong and solid case for the quern, a fine piece of furniture for the house, and put the quern in thorough trim. Then it ground everything he bade it; food, and all needful things for the house and the husbandry, so that they lacked nothing.

Once it came into the farmer's mind that it would be a good thing to have some money to spend, although, in truth, they needed none, as they had plenty of everything.

So he bade the quern grind gold, and repeated the same verse as before. And the quern ground on, and ground pure gold. This was done time after time, so that he shortly became mighty rich in gold.

Then said he to his wife, that he fain would know how much gold they had. She answered that she deemed that not needful; she only knew that they had plenty of it, as of everything else. But the farmer had no peace till he had found out by what means to measure his gold.

As they themselves had no measure, he ran to his brother's house, and asked him for a measure.

The rich brother bade his wife to lend him the measure. She did so, but said to herself, "What, in the wide world, can they have to measure?" And so saying, she took resin and smeared the measure with it, where the sides and the bottom meet, and then gave it to her brother-in-law.

He went home, and having measured his gold dust, gave back the measure.

His sister-in-law took the measure, and when he was gone, looked at it within, and found that all round the bottom clave gold dust to it. She then took it to her husband, and said, "Your brother measures gold, while we measure rye;" and he noticed that his brother had not, for a long while, begged aught of him, not, indeed, since he had got the ox-thigh. There was no question that the cottage-folk had something, for they looked well, and everything plainly throve with them. Then the goodwife bade the husband ask how matters might be with the others, for that this, his brother's happiness and welfare, could not be in the common course of things.

Now the rich brother went off, as he yearned to know how his brother had come into his wealth. So, when they met, the manor-farmer asked his brother what he had been measuring, the other day.

The latter told him the truth about it all.

The rich farmer asked him how this came about.

He answered that the devil had given him a quern, which ground every possible thing, obeying the aforesaid verse, which he also told the other quite truthfully. "This," he said, "the devil does because I gave him the thigh of the ox, which you bade me, the other day, take to him."

His brother did not at all understand this, nor could he confess that he had ever sent his poor brother, with an ox thigh on his shoulders, to the devil; he had, said he, given him the thigh.

"Nay, nay!" answered the other, "you bade me take it to the devil, and so I did. For this he gave me the quern, and since this goodness of his I have needed neither yours nor any one else's help."

After this they parted, and the rich man went home, pondering and wondering over what he had heard.

And the couple were filled with jealousy of the cottage-folk, and thought long how they could manage to get the quern for themselves. At last they agreed upon offering to the farmer all they had for it, and when they had got it, they should buy a vessel and leave the country, with their quern.

The husband, therefore, went to try the bargain with his brother, who, however, was very loth to listen to his offers. Then he offered him his manor, and all his goods and chattels.

The other answered that the manor had no great charm for him, as he could buy an estate quite as good whenever he liked. But as his brother eagerly wished for the quern, and as he himself was already rich enough, he would yield to his wishes, and let him have the quern, for all that he had.

Now they made the bargain, and the cottage-farmer moved to the manor, and took to himself all his brother's possessions. But the other bought himself a vessel, and embarked in it, taking nothing with him but his wife, his children, and his quern, thinking that he had made a marvellous gain by his bargain.

When he was at a good distance from the coast, he set to work to put the quern in trim, in order that it might grind them all they needed, and he repeated this verse:—

Grind neither malt nor salt;
Grind in the name of the Lord.

But do and say whatever he would, the quern stood still and immovable, till at last he grew angry, and cried out, in a wild rage:—

"Grind, then, both malt and salt;
Grind in the name of the Devil."

Then the quern began grinding malt and salt, and in a short while overcharged the vessel, and, as there were no means, anyhow, of stopping the quern, the end of it was that the vessel sank with all on board it, and has never since been seen. And it is told that the devil said he did not regret the change of quern-owners, for thereby he had got six souls for one.

But of the first quern-owner, it is told, that he had always riches and wealth enough after the loss of his quern, and, at last, began to think of his future and the fare of his soul. So he took two orphan children, gave them teaching, and bequeathed them his fortune at his and his wife's death; and they were fortunate and happy all their lives.

The Devil's Marriage.

Once, a mother and her daughter lived together. They were both well off, and the latter was deemed a good match. Many courted her with no avail, and people thought that, as she was a pious woman, she would live single, in the service of the Lord.

When the Devil heard of this, he liked it not at all, and turned himself into the shape of a young man, and wooed the girl, in order, thereby, to get her slowly into his power. He managed to make himself look so good and so pious, that he quite deceived the maiden. She accepted his troth, and they got wedded.

But when the Devil would enter the bed with his wife, she was so chaste and pure, that he could by no means bear to approach her, so feigned to be ill, and ordered a bath to be got ready for him, as only in that could he rest with some ease. This was done as the bridegroom desired, and he sat all night in his bath; and all the next day he spent in walking about, thinking how he could get himself out of this scrape.

On his way, he met a man, with whom he struck a bargain, that the stranger should be this woman's husband instead of himself, and should give him his first-born child, when it was seven years old, leaving it for him on the same spot whereon they now stood.

This the man promised to do, and the Devil gave him the same shape that he himself had worn, when he was wedded to his bride. The traveller then went to the bride, and she took him to be the true bridegroom, and this marriage turned out a very happy one.

As for children, they had only one son, and most tenderly did they love him. But when the boy had entered his seventh year, his father began to be very silent.

His wife entreated him to tell her why he was so uneasy in his mind, and, at last, he told her all the story.

"This you have hidden too long from me," said she; "but I will give you such rede in the matter as shall make nought the Devil's plan."

On the day when the boy had fulfilled his seventh year, the father went with his son to the spot where he had left the Devil, and, according to his wife's advice, he made a circle round the place, and consecrated it with holy song. He tarried with his son there till nightfall, and told him that whatever he might see during the night, he should not stir outside the circle, save to him who should give him his hand in Jesus' name.

After his father had left him, the lad first saw divers of his friends coming to the spot to offer him various dainties and sweets. Then he saw his parents, who tried to persuade him to come to them, now by coaxing, and now by threats. Next he saw children who played with sundry toys, and who begged him to come to them and join in their play. But the lad stayed firmly in his place, as no one came to reach him his hand, in the name of Jesus. After this he saw flashes and flames of fire, and eerie monster-shapes, and wonderful things of all kinds, until the dawn of day. At all these sights the boy was much frightened, but nevertheless kept his place. At the very beginning of day-break, his own parents came to him and gave him their hands, inside the circle in Jesus' name: and so the Devil lost his bargain.

LATE WILL THE SOULS OF PRIESTS BE FILLED.

THERE was once a young and hopeful fellow, who fell in love with a maiden and betrothed himself to her, but she was greatly against all wedlock with him. This gave him great grief, insomuch that he went about as one daft.

Once, during his lonely wanderings about the country, he was startled by a man coming up to him and greeting him. He received his greeting coldly, and said that he did not know him.

The stranger was very friendly and kind, and said, "I know full well that you are in sorry mood, and the cause thereof I know well too; and if you will promise to be my bondsman at the end of this year, I will, at once, contrive that the girl shall no less wish to be wed to you than you wish now, to wed her."

The young man accepted this offer thankfully, and they agreed to these terms.

After this, they parted, and the youth went home.

Soon after, he met the girl at church, and, strangely enough, she had now changed her mind altogether, and was as warmly in love with the young man as he had been with her.

But he, deeming this change not too truthful, received her tokens of love rather coolly. But he was convinced anon that it was all sincerely meant; and it came to pass, at last, that he married the girl, and their marriage turned out a most happy one.

Now the year advanced to its end, from the time when the stranger who helped him forward to his marriage had met him, and he became deeply concerned in his mind as to who that man could have been. A month before the removing day he went to the priest, told him all the story, and begged his advice.

The priest said: "Too late hast thou told me this, for that stranger was no other than the devil himself."

Now, this put the farmer mightily out of countenance, and he entreated the priest all the more, not to spare his aid. The priest gladly yielded to his request; gathered many people to him, and bade them scoop out a certain large mound, leaving the greensward untouched, and carrying out of the way all the mould. This done, he pierced a hole through the top of the mound, and when this was accomplished the moving day had arrived.

Now, the priest took a knapsack, (which in Iceland is made of leather in the form of a cylinder, with wooden bottoms, and called a "sál;" or "soul" in our tongue;) removed both bottoms therefrom, and, having put a wooden cross in one end, fastened the bag in the hole at the top of the mound, where it stood upright, like a chimney-pot, the wood cross being in the lower end.

After this, he said to the farmer, "Wait for thy customer, on the mound, and make it a condition for him—if he will that thou shouldst be his bondsman—that he fill the 'soul' with money, without causing loss to anybody; if he be unable to do this, declare that he has lost his bargain."

Thereupon, the priest left the farmer alone, who now did as he had been told. After a short while, came his customer, looking rather rougher than when they first met.

Quoth the farmer, "O! I forgot, when I last saw you, to ask a favour of you, which is of little matter to you, but of so great matter to me, that if you cannot do as I wish, I cannot possibly go to you to be your bondsman."

The Devil would know what this favour was.

"It is," said the man, "to fill that 'soul' with money, without causing loss to anybody."

The Devil viewed the "soul" with a fiendishly scornful look, and said: "Ah! Nothing else! That is no great feat;" and off he ran, and, after a short while, came back, dragging an immense sack after him, full of money and dripping with sea-water; this he poured at once into the "soul," but it remained as empty as before.

He went off for a second time, and brought back another drag-sack far larger than the first one, emptied it into the "soul," but the "soul" was as empty as before.

Off he went for the third time, and dragged back after him to the mound a far larger sack than either of the first two; but when he had poured this into the "soul," the "soul" was as empty as before.

For the fourth time, he rushed in devilish wrath to get one more money-sack, and brought one back, by far larger than any of the others.

When he had emptied this into the "soul," and the "soul" remained empty as ever, the cunning devil was struck with wonder, and, as he left the man and all hope of his bargain, he said: "Late indeed will the souls of priests be filled!"

The man was mighty glad of his deliverance from the fiend; and seeing that he was indebted to the priest for it, he divided the money equally between them. After this the devil came neither near them nor their money. And both farmer and priest were rich all the rest of their lives.

ROSAMUNDA.

ONCE there lived a King and Queen in their realm. They had one son, whose name has not been given in the story. He was brought up like other princes, and taught all arts, and a castle was built for him, and nothing spared to make it a princely dwelling, as he was far above all other men.

In this same country, there was a nobleman, who had a daughter by name Rosamunda, a wondrous beauty. But, albeit she was good, and quite well-bred, there was this fault to be found with her, that she could learn nothing, either with hands or head, being dull-minded and clumsy-handed. But, for her beauty, she was famous all over the kingdom.

The king's son once saw her, and forthwith fell in love with her, for her lovliness, and she fell in love with him for high learning and skill.

After this, the prince had an interview with his father, and said he would woo for himself a wife.

"Where dost thou look for a wife?" said the king.

Then the prince answered: "None shall ever be my wife but Rosamunda."

"Name not that match!" said the king. "She is stupid and ignorant beyond all measure, and known to be so all over the country. It will not be seemly for you to choose such an one for your wife; and, beside, she is of baser birth than you."

The prince would not quarrel with his father about this, but could never turn his mind from Rosamunda; and, after this, he became very melancholy, and wandered about alone, and paid little attention to the pleasures and gaities of the court.

Once, in his lonely wanderings, through forests and heaths, while he was deeply concerned about his future, there came to him a red-bearded, low-built man, and asked him why he, a king's son, wandered about thus lonely in these places, which was unseemly in him, and not becoming his rank: "Or," said he, "does aught ail you?"

The prince replied, "Little likely are you to help me out of my strait, although I revealed my sorrow to you."

The stranger answered: "You cannot be sure that I am not able to help you out of your distress; and, in order to shew you that I am not quite unacquainted with your life, I will tell you, that you are filled with grief because your father has prevailed on you not to wed Rosamunda the Fair, for that she is ignorant in head and hand."

This, the king's son said, was true, and prayed the stranger by all means to help him, since he knew all these things already.

Then the stranger took forth a small, slight rod of iron, and told the prince to give it to Rosamunda, who, when she would learn aught, should put it on the top of her tongue, but when she would accomplish any handiwork, should keep it between her fingers. This, he said, would make her an equally sharp learner, both in handiwork and book-learning, and, moreover, cause her to remember all she learnt, ever afterwards.

The king's son asked the man how much he might offer him for this.

The stranger replied: "This is so small a service, that I will charge nothing for it." And he said that he would come, besides, to Rosamunda, three years thence, to fetch the iron rod, but she should tell him, at the same time, his right name. "If she can do that without a mistake, she will," said he, "remember all she has learnt, even should she have given the iron rod away. But, if she cannot tell my name, I will take her, after these three years, as well as the iron rod. And my name is Rigdin-Rigdon."

The prince thanked him much for his advice, and took leave of him, going now home light in mind, and fixing the name of the man in his memory.

After this, the prince managed to get leave of his parents to fetch Rosamunda, in order to have all lady's arts taught to her, but on condition that, if she could learn nothing, he should not think of marrying her. This being agreed upon, the king's son went off with a splendid band of followers, fetched Rosamunda home to the king's court, and gave her the rod, telling her how to use it. But, in his glee at having brought her home to the court, he quite forgot the name of the man he had met in the wood.

Now all kinds of teachers were given to Rosamunda, in order to teach her all that was needed for a lady of her rank, and it avails not to spend many words on this, —that Rosamunda learnt everything, as soon as ever she saw or heard it.

But now the third year was fast waning, and the king's son could not, by any means, recall the name of the stranger. This cast him into deep gloom, and he was more concerned than ever before, that he should perchance have to lose his Rosamunda, who was, by this time, as accomplished a damsel as she was beautiful.

In this strait, he wandered about the country, wrapped in thought, till he came once to an open space in a wood. It was a lawn, and in the midst of the lawn there was a mound. He heard a great chattering and peals of laughter in the hillock, and on listening nearer, he understood that the inmates of the mound were telling in tale how many souls they had each beguiled. When the prince heard this he was quite at a loss, for all at once the thought struck him that the man he had formerly met in the wood might have been one of these fellows. He listened, however, awhile to their ravings, although he found himself in a perilous strait in this place;—as it were between heaven and hell.

At last he heard the following song sung in the mound:—

" Men who give me a fox's name
Have many a cause to do that same.
No mercy to the souls I shew,
When I claim of them what they owe.
I walk, like a lion, round about,
And many men's sight have I put out.
Harm and hurt to folk have I done,
And my name is Rigdin-Rigdon."

When the prince heard the name in the last verse, he at once remembered that it was the very name he had lost, and been so long thoughtful and anxious about. He now wrote down the name and returned home, easy and glad in mind.

Then he had a glass box made, so large that Rosamunda could stand inside it, and he wrote on the sides of it the name, Rigdin-Rigdon, in so many places, that nowhere about it could the eye be cast without seeing that name.

When the day arrived on which he awaited the coming of the man to fetch the rod, the prince made Rosamunda step inside the glass case, keeping with her the rod, and told her to give it to him that should come for it, and say at the same time,—"Rigdin-Rigdon." But whatever might happen, he warned her strongly not to lose courage, and by all means to remember the name, which he had written on purpose all over the box.

After this, the king's son left the room and locked it.

When a short time had passed, Rosamunda saw, all of a sudden, a man coming into the room through the locked door. He went straight up to the case, challenging her to come out.

She answered the challenge, stepped forward, and gave the rod to the man, saying; "Take it, Rigdin-Rigdon."

On hearing his name the stranger sank through the floor, where he stood.

Then the king's son wedded Rosamunda, and they had a share in the government of the realm, with their parents.

Rosamunda remembered all she had learnt by the aid of the rod, although its owner had been none other than the Devil himself. She was, in every way, a most wonderful queen, beloved by all; and she ruled the country, together with her husband, after the death of his parents, in happiness and peace, up to a high old age.

THE EXORCISM.

IN those times when it was the custom of the Church to drive the Bad Spirit out of new-born children by charms and prayers, it happened that a priest was called to baptize a child.

The Priest began the exorcism by saying:—

"Abi, male Spirite!"

But the Devil, having hidden himself in a corner of the church, roared out loudly:—

"Pessime Grammatice!"

Then the Priest said :—

"Abi, male Spiritu !"

The Devil answered :—

"Wrong first, now awkward too !"

Then the Priest said :—

"Abi, male Spiritus !"

And the Devil, as he went out, said :—

"Sic debuisti dicere prius !"

STORIES OF PARADISE AND HELL.

THE PRIEST AND THE ANGEL.

THE beginning of this story is that in the west part of the country was once a Priest, who was as greedy as he was unjust, haughty, and whimsical. Amongst other things, he adopted the custom of having worship in the church no less on week days than on the Sabbath, and even said that it was a breach of the Sabbath not to come to church on week days.

Once, in the winter-time, a child was brought to the priest to be baptized, but the weather was bad, and looked foul. The people who had brought the child told him their errand, but he gave them a downright good scolding, as was his wont, and said, amongst other things, that they ought to have let him know of this beforehand, denied baptism to the child, and drove the people away. But the folk who had brought the child, and the child itself also, died from cold and storm on their way back home. This in no way troubled the priest's conscience, and he went on quite as before.

Next summer the priest sent a notice to his parishioners that he had fixed the following Thursday for service.

This was in the high hay harvest.

No man said he would come, and yet none dared say he would not. When Thursday arrived, the priest awaited the coming of the people, and the celebration of worship. But when he found that his flock were too late in coming, he rushed into the church, and began walking up and down the floor. After he had been there awhile, an unknown man came to him and greeted him. The latter, in his haughty way, did not answer his greeting, only asking him whether he had seen any of the folk coming.

"What folk?" asked the stranger.

"Why, the church-folk, to be sure," said the priest.

"Why should they come to-day, a week day?" said the other. "Such a thing is unknown here, and everyone is, of course, busy in hay-making, so that none will come, and naturally enough."

The priest answered, "What does that matter to you? The folk are bound to come, as I have called them."

Quoth the other. "This indeed I call odd behaviour, and doubtless you are strange in many things more, my good priest, and unlike other people; and, if I sought, I could, I dare say, find much more that was odd about you."

Hereat the priest waxed wroth, and said: "What is there so wonderful about me?"

The man replied: "That I will shew you, if you like, and we will go out both together."

They did so; and when they got outside the door of the church the priest saw a large, oblong cask, filled to the brim with milk on one side, and blood on the other, which did not mingle together. At this the priest wondered, and went to the cask, and put his hand in, to try to mix them by stirring them about, but all in vain.

"This is certainly strange," said the priest.

"Sure enough," answered the other; "but you shall see more things of this kind."

The priest asked what this signified.

"That you shall know later," quoth the other.

Now they went into the churchyard, and came to a lake, whereon two grown birds were swimming, and one young one. No sooner had they touched the shore of the lake, than the young bird flew up, perched himself in the hair of the priest, and rooted it up without mercy. The priest tried to get rid of the bird, but being by no means able to do so, begged his fellow-walker to drive the bird off, but he answered that he might not yet do so.

After this, they came to a large waterfall in a river, beneath which a man was standing with his mouth wide open, swallowing the whole of the waterfall; but it ran out again through the back of his head, as it were through a sponge. This, too, the priest found a strange sight.

Next they came to another river, with a waterfall in it which fell over a mighty rock. Underneath was a man, who swallowed the whole of the waterfall, but no water could the priest see run from him again. Neither what this meant would the stranger tell the priest.

Now they came to a fine grassy pasture. Here the priest saw two sheep, both lean and ill-favoured, and they were so thin-woolled that one could count the hairs on them. They devoured the grass like wild beasts, and anon fought with one another as if one would drive the other out of the pasture. This, too, the priest found strange, and asked if the sheep had been long in the pasture.

The other answered him curtly: "I believe so."

Next they came on to a rough and barren heath, where scarce aught was to be seen but pebbles and gravel. There the priest saw other two sheep, fat and well-favoured, chewing merrily the cud, and resting one at the other's side like brothers. They bent, too, their heads one to the other, as if neither could bear to lose sight of the other.

Furthermore, they walked on, till they came to a palace so comely and glorious, that the priest thought he never had seen the like before. It was surrounded with green downs, and the scent of countless flowers filled the air. And, on all sides, the chirping of happy birds rang and rang back, and, inside the palace one could hear the sweetest strains of music and of song, and behold all possible manner of glee and merry-making. And all was so highly beauteous and charming, as to go far beyond fancy.

Then the priest said to his fellow traveller: "Nay! no farther will I go; let me rest here."

Quoth the other: "No! here must you not rest: another place is meant for you."

So, on they went for yet awhile, till the priest saw a house, the utter contrast of the palace. A foul stink filled the air, and everything was disgusting and frightful. There were also winged beasts in the shape of birds, who moved about for ever and shrieked. When the priest saw and heard all this, he was much struck with fear, and loathed the place so much that he begged the man to retreat thence, the sooner the better.

Then the stranger said: "Nay! here shall you dwell. This is a place for all folk like you."

"Oh!" said the priest, "let me get hence, and counsel me how I may avoid having this for my dwelling-place."

"That will I do," answered the stranger; "but you must know that this is the place of torment for all ungodly people, and but a faint shadow of hell, which you have deserved by a long spell of misdoings; but you may avoid it by repenting and henceforth mending your life."

This the priest promised to do.

And now, returning the same way they had come, they came to the palace.

"This," said the stranger, "is the place prepared for good and holy people; and the charms of this place are a faint foretaste of the eternal joys of God's children, which you have hitherto spurned with your sins and vices."

Now came they to the goodly and gentle sheep on the heath.

"These sheep," said the stranger, "mean poor people, who live content with what God gives them, and do not murmur, although they have not always at hand whatever they may wish for, but live together in lovely accord."

Then they came to the ugly and riotous sheep.

"These," said the stranger, "mean the rich, who never are satisfied, and never thrive, albeit they have abundance of all things, for they ever are striving for more; and the discord and quarrelsomeness of these sheep betoken the envious talk which the rich hold one of another."

Then they came to the river, whose fall the man swallowed up.

Quoth the stranger: "This river betokens the malice-sin, which the children of this world for ever drink and swallow, but part with never again; and they die in their wickedness, never quitting the sin till the sin quits them."

Then came they on to the waterfall, that fell into the mouth of the man beneath it, but ran through his back again.

"This," said the stranger, "shows you the sin of weakness, which ever takes hold of the best of the children of God, but they drive it at once from their hearts again."

Next they came to the lake whereon the storm-birds had been swimming.

Then said the stranger: "These two large upgrown birds betoken the two people whom you drove from your door in the winter time, out into the frost and storm, with the unbaptized child."

Next they came to the cask at the door of the church, in which the fluids had not mingled together.

Then said the stranger: "Here you may behold the blood you have sucked from the poor, and likewise that which you have sucked from the rich. They can never be mingled together, and therefore must you give recompense to the poor, and be more just in proportioning that which you take from rich and poor."

Now had their journey drawn to an end. They went into the church, and the priest begged the stranger to take the little bird out of his hair.

"That will I do," said the other; "but you must know that it is the avenging spirit of the child whom you refused to baptize, and now you must baptize it."

The stranger then took the bird out of the priest's hair, and the priest baptized it. This done, the little bird flew away and was no more seen, but the priest knelt down in prayer. After he had finished his prayer, his companion went with him out of the church, and vanished in the churchyard, from the priest's sight.

Then the priest went home to the farm, but met there another priest, who greeted him and asked who he was.

The old priest told him, and asked, in his turn, who the other was. The latter answered that he had had charge of the living since the former priest who was there, had vanished some seven years ago.

The old priest was greatly amazed at this, and saw now that the Angel of God had come to him in this trance, and that he had been in it for seven years.

Of all he had seen he made a good lesson for himself, mended his life, and entered a monastery, where he stayed for the rest of his days.

And herewith ends the tale.

The Soul of my own John.

There lived once an old man and an old woman together. The old man was a troublesome fellow, disliked by people, lazy and of no use at home. Hereat his old wife was much annoyed, and chid him often herefor with sharp chidings, saying that he was good for nought but to squander away all she could earn. For herself, she drudged all she could and spared no toil in getting what they needed, and was always safe to have her way with whomsoever she had to deal. But although they quarrelled in this respect, the dame loved well her old carl, and never let him want.

Once the old man fell sorely sick.

The old woman watched over him, and when the man's strength began slowly to fail him, it came into her thoughts that he might perchance not be so well prepared for death as to leave it unquestionable that he would be allowed to enter into the heavenly kingdom. She therefore thought it would not be amiss to try, herself, to bring his soul to its latter end.

In order to accomplish this, she took a leather bag, drew it tight over the old fellow's face, and when he died his soul went into the bag, whose mouth the old woman at once tied up.

After this, she went to heaven with the leather bag in her apron, and when she came to the heavenly gate, knocked at it, and out came St. Peter, asking her what was her business there.

"All hail!" said the old woman. "I bring here the soul of my own John; you have, no doubt, heard talk of him, and I would beg of you to get him in here, if you please."

⸤" "Ah! well!" said St. Peter ;„but I am sorry to say that I cannot do it for you. I certainly have heard talk of your John, but never heard good of him yet."

Quoth the other: "I never could think for a moment, St. Peter, that you were so hard-hearted; and now it is clear that you have quite forgotten how you acted in days of yore, when you forsook your own Master."

When this was said, St. Peter backed in and locked the door, but the old woman stood groaning and sighing outside.

Now after a while she knocked again, and out came St. Paul.

She greeted him, and asked him his name, which he truly told her. She then prayed him to interest himself a whit for the soul of her own John; but he said he would have nought to do with her, as this John deserved no mercy.

Then the woman waxed angry, and said: "Oh, this becomes you, undoubtedly, well; I deem you have better deserved this same mercy, when, of old, you persecuted both God and the good. I ask no more boons of you."

Paul slammed the door to, at once.

But when the old woman knocked for the third time, the Virgin Mary came out.

"All hail! my Good Lady!" said the old hag; "I hope you will allow my own John to come in, although Peter and Paul have both hindered his entrance."

"Ah," quoth the Virgin Mary, "my good old dame, I am sorry to say that I dare not do it; for your own John was such a wretched old John."

"Oh! why should I blame you for this!" said the old woman. "To tell you the truth, however, I thought you knew that others could be weak as well as yourself. You surely have not forgotten that the only child you ever had, you could not father."

Mary did not want to hear any more, after this, but shut to the door in a hurry.

A fourth time the old woman knocked, and out came Christ, who asked her what she was travelling up here for.

She said humbly: "I would only ask you, my good Saviour, to allow this poor soul to enter the door."

Christ answered: "Oh! it is your own John, is it? No, woman, he never believed in me."

Now, just as he was shutting the door, the old woman betook her to her quickness of hand, and threw the leather bag, with the soul in it, through the door, which was yet ajar. The bag was blown far into the heavenly palace, but the door slammed into the lock.

Now a stone was lifted from the heart of this old woman, since her own John was, in spite of all, in heaven, and she went home glad in mind.

Nothing more do we know of her, or of her own John, or how it fared, at last, with his soul.

THE SIN SACKS.

THERE was once a very zealous priest, whose preaching was hard, for he reminded his flock of their sins, without disguising them. In his parish there lived an old woman who seldom or never came to church, and the priest often chid her for it, and said she would scarcely get entrance into the kingdom of heaven, since she neglected so much the church. But to this the old woman paid no heed, and thus some time passed away.

Once the old woman fell ill, and begged that the priest might be brought to her, as the sins of men had caused her much deep grief.

The priest went at once to see the sick woman; and as he was about to begin his warning and comfort, seeing that her grief was a deep one, the old woman said: "Let me tell you what is my greatest and heaviest grief."

This the priest was glad to do, and listened most eagerly to the sinner's tale.

The old woman said: "A short while ago, I had a dream, and I dreamt that I came to the kingdom of heaven. There, I knocked at the door, begging for shelter, as I was cold and the weather was rough. A man came to the door with a large bunch of keys in his hand. I asked him his name. 'My name is Peter,' said he. I then knew with whom I had to deal, and entreated him to let me in. Quoth Peter: 'Nay, your place is not here.' 'O! let me in,' said I, 'I am so frightfully cold; allow me only to get inside the door.' 'Nay,' quoth Peter, 'by no means.' I now saw that a large storehouse stood opposite the door, and I asked Peter to allow me to enter it. That, he said he would grant me, and opened the storehouse. Then I was glad and hurried in, but Peter stood in the door. Now when I was well in I saw a mighty heap of sacks, large and small. They were all filled with something, and their mouths were tied to. There were also sea-mittens, of which some were quite full, others half full, and some with only the thumb full. I asked Peter what was in these sacks. He answered, 'The sins of men.' 'You will not, I hope, refuse to let me see the sack of our minister,' said I; 'I am sure it cannot be large.' 'Large!' said St. Peter; 'ah! it is not so very small, though. Look, it is yonder,'—pointing towards a huge sack. Now I was quite astonished, for it was by far the largest sack of them all. 'Oh!' said I, 'what a mighty big sack! but, prithee, where is my sack now? it is, I am sure, of no little size. 'Oh, that is all right enough,' quoth Peter, and pointed to one of the sea-mittens in whose thumb there was a very little. Hereat I was yet more astonished, and out I slipped again. Then Peter slammed to the door of the storehouse, and at this I awoke. This is what grieves me," said the old woman, "and therefore I sent for you, in order to tell you it."

But the priest, finding that this came rather home to himself, broke off his sick-visit, in a hurry.

DIVINE PUNISHMENT.

The Raven at Skídastadir.

AT a farm, called Skídastadir, in the north of Iceland, which stood under a steep and very high mountain, there lived, long ago, a very rich farmer. He had many household servants, and kept them sharply at work, summer and winter. In summer, he was wont to keep his people so hard at work, that no maid was ever allowed to be at home at the farm for cooking; this he made them do on the Sabbath, and then get over the cooking for the whole week, thus hindering them from going to church or hearing the Word of God read at home.

Amongst other of his servants there was a girl who, although dissatisfied with her place, and with the household ways and ungodliness of the farmer, had for a long while served at Skídastadir. She was of a peaceful temper, and ready to do all she was bidden, wherefore she was beloved by her masters and fellow servants. It had most often fallen to her lot to do the cookery on Sundays, but no other reward did she get for it than to have the scourings of the pans for her share.

One winter was a particularly hard one, insomuch that both men and beasts died from starvation. The farmer at Skídastadir refused all help and aid to his fellow parishioners who asked him for help for themselves and their beasts, and drove many a needy man from him, with harsh refusals instead of kind assistance. Neither were the servants at Skídastadir so well fed (although enough provisions were always at hand), that they could ever afford any aid to hungry visitors.

This girl, however, always tried to leave somewhat of her meals, and sometimes not a little to her pain, for those who came needy and hungry to Skídastadir.

This winter, all creatures were so worn out with hunger that they were found, in heaps, dead on the ground. For a long time not even a hungry sparrow could find as much food as he could pick up in his little bill. The ravens, therefore, as is their wont in such times, flocked to the different farms, in order to get hold of whatever eatable was cast out in the sweepings of the house. This was their only support this winter. The kindly girl tried to throw out, in the sweepings of the kitchen, as much as she could of small scraps of food, to help the poor, starving ravens. This she continued to do, and one of the ravens became so attached to her, that he followed her nearly everywhere, outside the house, and, the following spring and summer, he used to come home to Skídastadir, early in the morning, to get his breakfast from the girl's hand, for she always had something in store for him, and amused herself much with him.

Now, one Sunday morning, the girl had risen very early, to boil the stirabout for the household, and tried to have done scraping the pot before her raven-friend came, that she might please him with the scrapings. Just as she had done scraping the pot, she heard the voice of her friend, outside. She went out with the scrapings in a large ladle, and put them outside where she had been wont to put them before.

But the raven first began hopping round the ladle, and then fled away, a short distance, into the field.

The girl ran after him with the ladle, but he would not yet take the scrapings, and flew to a short distance from her and waited there for his kind friend, who followed him, not knowing what could possibly be the matter with her poor raven that had hitherto always devoured the scrapings with a raven's appetite.

This game went on between them till the raven had made the girl follow him to a good distance from the home-field, and she was beginning to think of returning home and letting her raven alone.

But while this was going on between the raven and the girl, the people at the different farms which stood in the valley, opposite Skídastadir, saw a man in white garments, walking along the ridge of the high mountains which stood over Skídastadir, with a staff in his hand, till he came to a spot on the mountain, just above the farm. Here he stopped at the very minute the girl was about to leave the raven, and struck with his staff on the mountain, and there at once slid down a large piece of it, ever increasing in its fall, and rolled over the farm, destroying every house and every life in the place, except that of the girl. Then she broke out into loud praises to God for having thus saved her from a terrible death by the aid of a raven.

HISTORICAL LEGENDS.

THE STORY OF BJÖRN OF ÖXL.

THERE was a man hight Peter, who was married, but the name of his wife is not given. At the time whereof this story tells, they had two children, a son Magnus and a daughter Sigridur. His wife once happened to be with child for the third time, and during her pregnancy she was at times seized with an irresistible desire to drink human blood. This desire even grew so fearfully upon her, that she thought she could live no longer if she did not contrive to quench her blood-thirst. She struggled and strove for a long time against this unnatural wish, without telling any one what she had to contend with, but at last she was overcome and could hide it no longer from her husband.

Now because this marriage was a happy one, and the husband could not refuse his wife anything he found in his power to do for her, he opened a vein in his foot and made her drink the blood. Having satisfied her thirst, she was visited in her sleep by many awful sights, horrible and loathsome beyond telling, and of such a kind as forbids us to speak openly of them. She therefore mentioned to one of her handmaids, that she had great fears lest her child should be in many ways different from others, and perhaps be some monstrous being.

Now time went on till her deliverance, which passed off naturally enough. She bore a boy, of healthy looks, who at his baptism was called Björn. He got on well and throve wonderfully.

A man was named Ormr the Rich, who lived at a farm called Knörr. He was surnamed the rich because he was owner of all the estates which were in the district, Breidavik. This Ormr had given Peter the management of one of his farms, called Húsanes. He was friendly to Peter and his wife, although he was deemed hard to deal with by other people, as may be seen by this saying:—

None is worse
Than Ormr at Knörr.

When the brothers Magnus and Björn were six and five years old, Ormr once happened to ride to the sea-shore in search of driftwood, and saw the brothers playing together upon a narrow rib of land stretching into the sea, where Björn was abusing and shamefully maltreating his brother. Ormr having witnessed this scene, rode home to Húsanes, and offered the parents to take Magnus home to himself, to foster him, for the times were hard; but the mother entreated him rather to take Björn, who was of ungovernable temper, which under the guidance of Ormr might be turned to good for the boy, and of him, she said, Ormr alone of all others was likely to make a man. To these showings Ormr yielded, and took Björn home to Knörr.

At Knörr Björn became the near friend of a youth, Ormr's cowkeeper. They lived together nearly night and day in the cowhouse, which was a large building holding thirty beasts.

Björn grew speedily strong and tall, after he came to Ormr, but his mind was gloomy and his temper harsh and violent.

Ormr had a base-born son, by name Gudmundr, of the same age as Björn, and early a man of great power, like his father, and hardy. He exercised himself in wrestling and other arts which at that time were rather neglected; but to labour he was not pressed. He and Björn soon became close friends.

At this time, there was a church at Knörr, and Ormr was wont to see strictly that his servants went to church. Once, however, it happened that Björn slept in his bed instead of going to church, this being, of course, against the will and knowledge of Ormr. Björn then had a dream, and dreamt that a stranger came to him, carrying a dish in his hand, with meat on it, cut in pieces. This he offered to Björn, who took it at once, and eat eighteen bits off the dish, finding one more delicious than the others, but at the nineteenth he became sick and ill, and would have no more of the meat.

The stranger said to him: "Well have you done, to accept of my meal; but now I have more to tell you. Go, to-morrow, up to the shoulder of the mountain, where you will see two strange stones of large size. Lift up the lesser of these stones, and whatever you find beneath it belongs to you: make as good use of it as you can; it is endowed with the power of making you known far and wide."

After this the dream-man vanished, but as Björn awoke, he was full of longing to go in search of what had been pointed out to him in his dream.

Next day, Björn got up early, climbed to the mountain-peak, and found the stones. Under the smaller he found an axe, not a large, but a sharp-cutting weapon.

As soon as he had the weapon in his hand, he was filled with slaughter-longing; he returned to a farm called Frambúdir, hiding the axe under his clothes, and allowing nobody to see it. As it was his turn to row out fishing that day, he hid the axe in a lava-rift, and then went out with the other fishermen.

In the course of the day, he asked the crew on the boat what they would give him for the thing he had found in the mountain. They answered that it could hardly be aught of interest or value. But at night, as they had landed, he ran off from the boat, and soon returned, brandishing an axe in his hand in all the unrestrained temper of a fight-lusty warrior, and said with a hollow and cold laugh: "Which of you likes to let his night-quarters depend upon this?" They were startled out of their wits and would have no contest whatever with this madman. But one of the crew, an old and shrewd fisherman, said to his fellows, not heeding the warlike threat of Björn: "Take the axe from him, for it is a luckless weapon."

Björn, seeing that, here, he had to deal with too many, awaited not their assault, but ran his way home to Knörr.

Soon after, the cowkeeper at Knörr, Björn's good companion, vanished and was never heard of more.

One of the handmaids at Knörr was named Steinun; she waited upon Björn, and he afterwards married her.

At this time, Björn's fosterfather, Ormr the Rich, died, but his son Gudmundr succeeded to his possessions, and lived at Knörr, and waxed soon as mighty in the district as his father had been. He gave Björn the tenancy of the farm Öxl, where Björn now began farming, with his wife Steinun. They got on well. He had few servants, but those he had he treated well.

People soon began to wonder at the number of horses which Björn had, and some to be suspicious about the manner in which he might have got them. And about this time, it began to be in folks' mouths that Björn murdered men and robbed them.

Once, a rich namesake of Björn's sent two of his menservants to the west, in order to fish in the district round Snœfells-Jökull, and asked Björn of Öxl to help them on if they were in any need of his aid. When they came to Öxl and Björn saw that they were well equipped and had fine horses, he begged them to step into the cowhouse with him. It was a dark house within, but in spite of the darkness, one of the men saw something gleam in the hand of Björn. He then thought it well to tell him of his master's recommendation, and no sooner had Björn heard it than he changed his behaviour, and treated the men in the best possible manner, and got them good places for the ensuing fishing season.

It is said that he had once a guest from the north-country, and shewed him to a bed in the guest-hall at night, apart from the family room. As soon as the man had got to bed, a strange sleeplessness came over him, so that he left the bed again. He then happened perchance to grope under the bed, and lo! he found there the corpse of a man. He was much startled at this, but had enough strength of mind to throw the dead man into the bed and cover him over with the bedding, and he himself got under the bed where the dead man had been. When about one third of the night was left, Björn and his wife entered the guest-hall. Björn had an axe in his hand and struck with it the corpse, for he took it, of course, to be his guest, and did not want him to tell news from Öxl.

The wife said, "Why are his death-throes so slightly seen?" Björn answered: "I heard a low groan; he has been very tired, but the blow was no small one, old woman!"

After this, they went to the family room, but at the dawn of day the guest escaped from the farm, sound in life and limb.

Although a great many dark tales were floating about of Björn's murders, no one dared to raise a lawsuit against him, on account of the power of his foster-brother Gudmundr, at Knörr. But at this time, a thing took place which cooled their friendship.

Once, Gudmundr rode from home, having two horses for change. Returning home, he came to Öxl late in the afternoon, and asked for something to drink. Björn asked him to step in, but that Gudmundr would not do.

Then came out Björn's wife, with a jug full of whey, and gave it to Gudmundr to drink sitting on horseback. But as he was going to drink, Björn came out, carrying over his shoulders a large cloak, and Gudmundr, seeing the end of a haft stretching down from under the cloak, flung the whey-jug out of his hand, and rode off in haste. At the same moment Björn lifted his axe aloft in order to deal Gudmundr his death-blow, but missing him, he wounded his horse so heavily that Gudmundr could not ride it home, and was obliged, on the way, to change and take the unwounded one. Next day, Björn's wife went to Knörr, entreating Gudmundr to pardon Björn this assault, which he promised her not to make more of, but said at the same time, that it availed nought, as his awful crimes would, sooner or later, come to light.

This same year, the Wednesday next before Easter, two young people, a brother and sister, came to Björn at Öxl, and craved lodging for the night. There was a thaw that day, and it was late ere they arrived at Öxl. They were hospitably received and given dry clothes, and food was put on the table before them. In the family room there was an old woman who was lulling a child to sleep. She, it must be known, wanted to warn these young folk of their great danger, and, whenever Björn's wife went out of the room, and none but the guests were present, chaunted mutteringly this ditty :—

" None at Murder-Björn's should be guest,
Who is in goodly garments drest :
He bears them off to the leech's-tarn ;—
There runs blood
Along the road.
I lull thee, lull thee, bairn."

When the young folk had taken their meals, the girl walked out of the room, but soon after, her brother heard her crying out, and, startled at this, he ran oft into a cattle pen, with Björn after him. The lad jumped inside the wall of the crib, and ran along it to the inner end of the pen, where a door entered into a hay-barn, and where he found an outlet, as the sod-thatch of the barn was unfrozen. Close after him came Björn, but lost sight of him in the darkness, and he, while Björn was searching for him in the gloomy barn, got off into the lava and hid himself in one of its many rifts. The next night, the lad got to a farm called Hraunlönd, the farmer of which guided him to the parish officer, by name Ingimundr, a powerful man and stern doer of justice. Easter morning early, the officer took two strong-minded people with him to Knörr, to Gudmundr, who was no friend of Ingimundr, having at sundry times been worsted by him, as well in bodily as other contests.

This Easter Monday the sun shone from a clear and calm sky. Many people had come to church at Knörr, and basked in the sun till the worship began. Amongst others there was also Björn from Öxl, who, they tell, made to the standers by this remark:—"Now are the sun-chary and gloomy days, brothers!"

Soon after this, Ingimundr went up to Björn, and asked him where he had gotten the cap which he wore on his head. Then he unbuttoned the tunic which Björn wore over his clothes, and asked him where he had gotten that silver-buttoned jacket and vest which he had on.

Björn answered: "These are surely odd questions, and I am not going to answer them."

Ingimundr said he was in no need of his answer, and calling some people to him, bade them look at the clothes, and witness if these clothes were not the same which his servant Sigurdr had worn when he left Ingimundr two years since, and vanished, so that no one knew anything more of him. They proved to be the very same; wherefore Ingimundr called upon Gudmundr, Ormr's son, to seize Björn as a misdoer, which he refused to do.

Ingimundr then took Björn prisoner, charging him with having murdered Sigurdr his manservant, and the girl told of above, and gave him into the keep of the law-man, where his wife Steinun was also held in prison.

Now Björn owned before the law-man that he had murdered in all eighteen people, the first of whom had been the cowherd at Knörr, whom he had buried under the floor in the cowhouse; the other seventeen he had sunken into Leech-tarn with a stone tied to each body; also that his wife had known all he had done, and had aided him in the work. At the next Thing they were both condemned to death. The limbs of Björn were first to be broken, and after that he should be beheaded. But the execution of Steinun was put off till after her childbed, as she was with child. A young man, a near kinsman of Björn's, was got to break his limbs and behead him. His legs were broken with a wooden club, and something soft put under them, that his torments might be all the more painful. Manfully Björn met his death, and all the tortures that accompanied it; neither changed he his mien, nor gave one sign of pain. Once, while his bones were being broken, he said: "Seldom breaks a bone well on hollow ground, kinsman Olafr!" When all his limbs were broken, his wife said to those around: "Fast now are mangled the limbs of my Björn." But Björn, hearing this, said: "One there is left yet, however, which, ah me! better were off!" This said, he was beheaded.

His barrow is to be seen, even yet, and is called Björn's Barrow, of Öxl.

Having given birth to a son, who was hight Sveinn, and afterwards surnamed Skotti—a great thief, who was at last hanged for his misdeeds—the wife of Björn was put to death without even showing a sign of repentance for her crimes.

THE STROKES OF THE PEOPLE OF HÓLAR.

IT has long been generally thought among the people of the South and West of Iceland, that the Northerners were boasters and braggarts, but at the same time they were looked on as able folk, and quick, and sharp-minded in straits; and this the following tale shall show.

Twelve Northerners once went from Hólar, to the South, for fishing, but on the mountain called Tvídœgra, they met with a fearful snowstorm, and all of them died but one, who managed to get to the next farm, worn out with fatigue, and nearly frozen to death. The farmer, who had, the year before, been scoffed at and abused by the people from Hólar, remembered how they had dealt with him, and, instead of giving the man, needy as he was, a kind welcome, he said with a cold and mocking scorn to him, "Ah! now the loads of the people of Hólar are waxing somewhat light."

The other answered, although on the very eve of death: "But, for all that, the strokes of the people of Hólar are no lighter;" and at the same moment he dealt the farmer a mighty blow with his fist, in the face. But he was so cold, that, at the blow, the frozen arm dropped off, and the man fell down dead on the spot.

JÓN TEITSSON OF HAFGRIMSTADIR.

THE beginning of this story is that a man, hight Teitr, lived at Starrastadir, in Skagafjördr. He was uncle to Teit Thorleifsson, who had the quarrels with Gollskalk bishop of Hólar. Teitr was a great man, safe, silent, and foretelling. He was not rich; the farm of Starrastadir, however, belonged to him, where he carried on good farming and took great care of his household concerns. He had a wife, by name Ragnhildr, a native of the west-country. As to children, they had only one son, by name Jón. He was, at an early age, strong, and tall, and silent like his father. He was a fellow of no gaiety, and only smiled when others roared with laughter. This was his wont, even from his early childhood, and later, he made it his rule, saying it was unmanly and unseemly to shriek like brutes. He was brought up at his father's, till he was fourteen years of age, when he was equal in strength to the sturdiest men in Skagafjördr. This same year, in the autumn, his father sent him together with some of the neighbours, to a district called Fljót, in order to buy dried codfish, the neighbours being charged with looking after the bargain on his behalf.

The farmers little liked to have Jón with them on their journey, finding him too young and his strength not to be trusted to, for such a long spell of travelling in the autumn days.

He went, however, and his father said to him that, if he was left behind, he should look after himself. Jón rode a yellow-grey horse, which his father was wont to ride, and used his father's riding gear, in every way well fitted out with care, but mostly the bridle which was finely broidered, and the choicest of things; many had wished to buy it, but Jón's father had ever refused to part with it.

Now they started off, and had a good journey whither they were bound; the fish-cheaping was easy, and having got as much as they could load their horses with, they turned homewards.

But now the weather changed, and it came over with heavy snowfall and hard frost.

Jón was always the foremost, dragging his horse by the reins, since riding had become impossible, the state of the roads being so bad. Late in the day, they came to a river, called Kolbeinsá, but as it was deemed impassable, being swollen with half-frozen snow, Jón's companions suggested returning to the nearest farm, and there waiting till the ice on the river had become strong enough to bear the horses. Of this, Jón would hear nothing, calling it cowardice, and swearing he would name them all faintbearts if they would not go on with their travel.

He turned his horses to the river, but one of the men, going to him and trying to take his horses from him and force them back, was caught hold of by Jón, who, after some struggle, flung the man heavily to the ground. Hereat his companions turned from him and said it was well deserved that the hairbrained fellow should die for his own foolhardiness. Now Jón tied the loads to the pack-saddle-spikes, and rode into the river, dragging all his horses after him. His yellow-grey horse waded sturdily, breaking through the ice, but when Jón was across, he saw that the loads of the hindermost horse had turned over and that the beast was entangled in the girths. He then waded to the horse, the half-frozen water reaching up to his shoulder, and managed to get both horse and load out of the river, which truly was a great exploit.

While he was struggling thus in the river, the storm increased in strength, with fearful snowfall and hard frost, so that everything soon became stone-frozen, but Jón went on with his journey, shaping his road by the weather.

Now the night set in, and to its deep darkness added not a little the snow storm. It was no longer possible for him to ride, so he was forced to dismount and grope about with his hands, to assure himself of the way. When he had thus travelled a good while, he stumbled upon a small and wretched shed, doorless and half filled with snow. In spite of such uninviting lodgings, he resolved upon making the shed his quarters for the night, He took off the loads and carried them to the doorway, and then tethered the horses together; after that, he blocked up the doorway with the load, and buried himself in the snow, in order to thaw his frozen clothes, but, as he was very tired and his strength was fast failing him, he fell into a deep sleep and slept till broad daylight.

As he awoke, he saw the doorway open and went out; the weather was somewhat brighter but the frost was sharp.

Now Jón was not a little astonished to see that some of the loads had disappeared, as also had his riding-nag, saddle, bridle and all, the other horses being untethered.

Near the spot Jón saw a farm, where lived a farmer, by name Tomas, a mean fellow and hated by all, as he often was wont to rob travellers, and steal their goods.

Jón went to the farm and found it locked; he then wandered round it, and at the back of the houses he found a small hut, the door of which was locked from within. Within it he heard a horse neigh, and he thrust at once his foot against the door with such force that it burst open in many pieces. Here he found his father's yellow-grey horse with the bridle on, but the saddle was in the rack. In the further end of the hut there was a door, where the side-wall and gable met, but all that part was wrapped in gloom and darkness.

All of a sudden, he saw a wooden club hurled at him out of the darkness, but he bent down before the blow, which missed him and struck the ground; and now he saw a man drawn out of the darkness by the strong whirl of the club..

Jón rushed at him nimbly and he received the assault, and now they wrestled mightily together. But although Jón was stiff and frozen, their encounter ended by Jón's felling this shadow-lurker; and having got him underneath, he thrust his knees with all his might into the belly and breast of his assailant, who was no other than the farmer himself. And Jón said he would spare his life only on the condition that he gave back all he had stolen, and would afford him also, without grudging or grumbling, all that he needed for himself and his horses.

This the farmer promised, and Jón then let him get up, hurt and bruised as he was, and having one of his arms broken. The loads which Jón lacked, the man had hidden in this hut and covered over with branches of brushwood.

After this, they went home to the farmhouse, and the farmer took Jón to the family room, saying that he would fetch his horses. No one did Jón see inside the house but the farmer's wife and their son, a half grown-up lad. He was shown to a seat, and viewing thence the farmer's wife, he found her mighty ill-looking.

After a while she went out of the room and called her son with her.

Soon after Jón heard a loud and fierce baying of dogs, and leaping from his seat, went to see what was going on, and as he came out, lo! the son of the farmer was stealing off from the farm with Jón's bridle in his hand, and ran to a heap of snow, where he began to bury it, while the farmer's wife set all the dogs at Jón's horses.

Jón ran after the lad, took the bridle and dealt him such a blow with it as to send him spinning to the ground; where he left him stretched senseless. But, at this moment, the farmer came up to him and entreated mercy for himself and his family, and, fetching the horses, gave them food enough, and treated Jón in the best way possible.

Here Jón dwelt all that day and the next night. On the morrow the good-wife gave him his clothes, all dried and in trim. Now Jón set forth, and came home to his father, and was thought much of after this journey.

The arm-broken farmer fell ill after his encounter with Jón, and was sick for a long while to come, but his rascality towards travellers was never heard of again.

After Jón's return, the bad weather kept on for a long time, and his companions first came home, a month later, and had been forced to use and sell for food, a great deal of their hard-wares.

When Jón was sixteen years of age, he much wished to go to the South for fishing, as this was the custom with people in Skagafjördr, but mostly with those at Hólar; and, in those days the Hólar-folk were a set of riotous, illwilled, and boasting fellows.

This winter so much snow had fallen, and the weather continued so bad, that few besides these men dared to undertake that hazardous journey to the South.

Jón came, one day, to his father, and told him what he wished to do. Nought availed his father's forbiddings for Jón must have his way, and so busked for the journey, at the same time that the Hólar-folk started too.

Teitr went with his son to the farm called Vidimýri.

Jón was clad in blue, but over his clothes he wore a frock of drab sheep-colour, which reached down to his knees. He had begged, too, his father to yield him his precious bridle; which his father had given him, saying, however, at the same time: "I shall not wonder if some one else likes to have this bridle."

When father and son came to Vidimýri, the Hólar-folk had already arrived there, and were gaily dressed, and behaved, as was their wont, in a frolicsome manner. There were eighteen together, and their leader, a Norseman by birth, was hight Asgautr, an evil-minded and unmanageable fellow.

Teitr asked them to allow his son to have the gain of their company; but they answered: "That sheep-brown cottage youth is surely a disparagement to our company; however, if he likes, he may stagger after us."

As father and son parted, the former strongly warned Jón not to rest on the way at the same farms as his fellows, but always to follow behind them; and so he would come home the first of them;—otherwise, the last.

This Jón promised, and went along with them, as his father had bidden him.

Very ill behaved the men of Hólar, took always for themselves hay and other things of which they were in want, from the farmers, and paid only with shameful abuses and meanness. Never did Jón rest at the same farm with them at night, but followed them always during the day. He paid freely everywhere his night's lodging.

As they passed the mountain called Midfjardar-háls, the snow was falling thickly, and darkness was over all. There they met with a herdsman who watched his flock, and at once asked his guidance over the long mountain, but he refused it, saying he neither would nor could possibly leave his flock.

Then Asgautr rushed at him, and flinging him high into the air, let him fall so heavily to the earth that his brain was dashed out and scattered over the ice-covered ground.

After this, they came to Midfjördr, where they took house and hay at their own pleasure, but drove out the horses that were in the stable before.

Jón, as was his wont, rested at a hut in the neighbourhood. Next day, he joined their company, when they were ready to start.

Then Asgautr saw Jón's bridle, and bade him give it up at once, for such a thing was certainly too handsome for him, such a fearful and odd fellow as he was.

Jón answered modestly, and asked how much he would pay for it.

"Pay?" quoth the other; and siezed a dog which stood near, by the tail, and gave Jón such a mighty blow with it, that the blood burst, at once, from his nose, and covered him down to the waist; saying at the same time: "There is your payment."

Then Jón flew at him, and but a short while had they struggled before Jón threw Asgautr to the ground, who fell with his back on a stone, and one of his thighs was put out of joint.

Asgautr's comrades would take vengeance for him, but Jón was so furious and formidable to look upon, that none of them had courage to go at him, all being struck with awe at the very look of the man.

To the next farm was Asgautr carried, where, shortly after, he died.

Next day, proceeding on their journey, they came to a church-farm, called Stadr, where they got night-quarters in the church. Here they behaved in the most shameless and scandalous manner, to the disgust of all who either saw or heard them, and every man wished them ill.

Next morning, the weather was gloomy and the snow fell thick, and they were told that the mountain they had to cross was utterly impassable, many folk who had tried the pass before them, having been obliged to go round by another way. That night Jón rested at a farm in the neighbourhood, and behaved as ever, to everyone's mind.

In the morning, the farmer warned him not to go, but Jón was not to be persuaded to stay, and so took his leave, and the farmer wished him all success on his journey.

Now Jón joined again the company of Hólar travellers. They all gave him a look of deep ill-will, but did not dare to assault him.

As they entered the mountain-pass, it came over with awful storm, the snow falling in thick clouds, and the flakes so dashed in their faces in the roaring wind that not one inch could they see before them. They took their course towards the quarter whence blew the storm, and pushed on eagerly.

Jón was behind, as was his wont, and dragged two horses by the reins. Thus, for a while they went on, till Jón found his companions vanished all of a sudden. He looked, and saw that he was on the very edge of a great rock-precipice; the others had gone over the edge of this on to a hanging heap of snow, which, too weak to bear them and their horses, had broken at the sheer of the rock and hurled the whole lot to their fate, a miserable fall over the steep cliff into the abyss beneath.

The precipice is since called "Bane." At the bottom are heaps of fallen rock and stones, where horses' bones have since been found.

After this, Jón left the spot and, by another path, passed the mountain, the storm having abated a little, and arrived, in the evening at a farm called Haukadalr, where he was kept for a month by the bad weather and unceasing snowfall. After that, it was too late for him to go to the fishing station in the South; but, by no means, would he return home, and at the hint of the farm-folk, he decided upon going to a fishing-station in the West, and nought more is told of his journey, till he came to the district of Snœfells-jökull.

There was a man hight Thorsteinn, who lived at a farm called Skjaldartröd; he was a mighty fisherman, and never had more than four men to row in a boat, which was, of wont, rowed by eight. He was the luckiest of fish-catchers, rowed always first, and used often to sit fishing when other folk found it impossible, and was counted to be the richest man in all that district. He had a wife, whose name is not given, but who was so strong that she took down from the high hearth a pot of wellnigh an hundredweight with ease, but she was as gentle in mind as she was strong in body, and was looked upon as one of the foremost women in the parish. They had a daughter, by name Gudrún, fair of looks, wise, and well bred, and a very good match.

It often chanced that Thorsteinn had need of rowers, for few were able to stand his manner of fishing, and so, at this same time, it chanced.

Jón, therefore, went to the farmer, and became one of his crew, and was greatly liked by Thorsteinn, in spite of his being unused to the sea.

It was then the custom in that district, to hold the so-called boor-wrestling, on the first day of the summer, to which game many sturdy and brave fellows were wont to gather together. Jón was asked to wrestle also; he was at first unwilling, but yielded at last to the others' entreaties. He was nought of a wrestler, but few could stand his strength, and the end of all his wrestling was that he felled most of the folk whom he had to encounter.

Thorsteinn's wife liked Jón much, as she found him a hopeful youth. Once she dared him to wrestle with herself, and managed to throw him on one of his knees, telling him he might scarcely be called woman-strong after such a defeat.

When Jón had made a goodly draught in the winter, he busked in the spring, to leave for the North, and as he took his leave, he was bidden by the married couple, as also by their daughter, with whom Jón had often had secret talk, soon to return again.

Now must we tell, that Bishop Gottskalk of Hólar heard the luckless end of these men, and how Asgautr had been treated by Jón. He would have blood-money from Jón for having slain Asgautr, and, to this end, sent two of his priests, with many men, to Jón's father, demanding, for the bishop, all his loose wealth, and his farm Starrastadir, for the church of Mœlifell, if so be he would save the life of his son.

Teitr complied not with this command; wherefore was he called before the bishop's court, where he should appear on a certain day. After this the bishop's men started away.

Jón was highly wroth, but agreed with his father, that now was the time to act and not to be idle. At their farm, Starrastadir, there was a storehouse, strong, with a massive lock.

Now father and son agreed that old Teitr should go to bed in the storehouse, but Jón take all the farming in hand. He hired two of the strongest men in the parish, and now time went on till the appointed day, whereon Teitr was summoned before the bishop. Teitr did not appear in the court, but the bishop heard of his illness; wherefore he went to Starrastadir, to settle the whole affair there. With him he had eight men.

When Jón saw the bishop's troop approaching the wall of the home-field, he covered the storehouse inside with hangings, behind which he hid his father and the two strong fellows whom he had hired. But in the farmer's bed they put a large pitchfork, and covered it with the bedding. When the bishop arrived at the house, Jón was standing outside with a downcast mien.

The bishop, asking where his father was, Jón told him he was in the storehouse. So he stepped therein and one or two men with him. As soon as they were inside, Jón went in and thrusting the door into the lock, took out the key; at this, the others rushed forth, from behind the hangings and seized the bishop. But of what they did with him, nothing is known. However, the bishop rode quietly back to Hólar, when he got out, and never tried to annoy father or son any more; and it is confidently said that he must have been made to swear in that storehouse, an oath to that end.

The next fishing-season, Jón rowed with his friend Thorsteinn, and nothing is told of what he did, till he was eighteen or nineteen years of age. He then went once more, to the West, and two of his fellow-parishioners with him. Of their travels nothing is told, till they came to Haukadalr.

At this time, great talk was afloat of three brothers who dwelt at a farm called Gunnarstadir, who often committed highway-robberies and did, everywhere, the greatest mischief, and foulest deeds, growing worse day by day. Now, as they went on their journey, Jón begged his companions to take care of his horses and baggage, but went himself out of the highway, towards Gunnarstadir. He carried a large long-sack across his shoulders, and inside it had empty bags of skin. As he approached the farm, he filled these bags with stones, put them carefully back into his sack, and tied up their mouths. It was late in the day when he came to the farm, and up to the door he went and knocked at it. When he had knocked, there came out a man, and a rascally-looking fellow he was.

Jón asked him for a draught, to quench his thirst. He brought him a frozen drink, whereof Jón only drank very little. At this time, another fellow shewed himself outside the door, yet more thievish-looking than the first one; they asked Jón what he was faring, but he answered that he was a messenger from the bishop of Hólar. At this, they looked one into the other's face, and it was clear that this news was right welcome to them, and it so changed their faces, that looks of the fiercest villany played over them, plainly enough. One of them grasped at the sack on Jón's shoulder, and said that he had a great deal to carry: to the which Jón did not say nay. They did not ask him to stay. Jón would know from them the way over the mountain. They told him the mountain was short to cross, and easy the road, if only the right one was taken, and offered to guide Jón till he was safe on the road; the which Jón gladly accepted.

Now they went off, three together, and Jón walked behind with his load. Just under the mountain, they stopped suddenly at a lake, which was not quite covered with ice, there being holes in it, here and there.

One of the men took a flask from his pocket and bade Jón taste what was in it.

Jón said that it was the custom at Hólar, for him who offered another to drink, to taste first the drink himself.

Then the man drank out of the flask, but, meanwhile, Jón saw the other take a large knife out of his sleeve.

Jón had a very strong staff in his hand, and seizing it,—heavy and ice-loaded as it was,—he dealt the man with the knife in his hand, such a blow that he fell to the ground senseless on the spot; but with his other hand he gave such a stroke of the fist to the bottom of the flask, that it broke into pieces, leaving them sticking in the face of his foe. After this, he dealt right harshly with them, leaving one nearly dead, and the other in so weak a state that he scarce could help home his brother in the night; who, thereafter kept long to his sick-bed, and then died. But, in this way, the robberies of these scoundrels was done away with.

Now Jón returned to his companions who proceeded, the next day, as before. Jón rowed, as he was wont, in Skjaldartröd, at those times, and was now so strong that no man dared to match his strength with him, but he was as quiet and gentle as he was strong, and behaved as a manly fellow, in every way.

Once, that same winter, Thorsteinn was out fishing, on the usual fishing-banks, when all others had rowed ashore, and had greatly loaded his craft with fish. Then a storm arose from the land and Thorsteinn bade the four men he had on board, to take to their rowing. This they did, and rowed with all their strength. But, after a while, the rowers began to be tired, and could scarcely pull so much as to keep the boat from drifting away before the storm. But now took Jón to rowing alone, on one side of the boat, while the others rowed on the other, and on they sped well, reached the land, and hauled all their things up in safety. And by this feat, did Jón become most famous for his strength.

That winter, Jón got a goodly share of the fish, and went home, as he was wont, after that the fishing-season was over. In the early summer, he went to the West to fetch his fish, and his two fellow-parishioners with him.

In this journey, he wooed Gudrún, the daughter of Thorsteinn, and, having easily got both hers and her parents' consent, married her at once, and the wedding-feast was held in the father's house. After the marriage, he went to the North with his wife, richly endowed, by the father's kindness, with cattle and money. He began farming at a place called Hafgrimstadir, in Tungusveit, and afterwards buying himself the farm, became well off, and a farmer of great esteem.

He went every summer to the West, for fish-cheaping.

Long after this, did Jón hear the news of his uncle having died somewhere in the West-firths, and of himself coming into all his inheritance after him. He, at once, busked for a journey westward, late in the winter. He was lucky in his travels, and having sold the loose goods he had inherited and such things as he could not take with him, for he took nothing more than he could carry on his back, such as were precious things and money, he addressed him homewards again, in a stormy season with frequent snowfalls. He knew but little about the roads in those parts, being strange to that quarter of the country, but in spite of this, he took never a guide. Once, on his way, he came late in a snow-stormy day to a humble cottage, on the shore of a thickly-peopled bay, and as he had a heavy load to carry, of money and precious things, he was tired, and resolved to ask here for a night's lodging. He knocked at the door, and out there came an old carl, big and strong-looking, and, Jón thought that never had he seen a bigger fellow in all his life. Jón asked him about the way.

"That will I tell you to-morrow," said the other, "but now is the weather dangerous and the day nigh to its end, and therefore, I pray you, rest here for the night."

This Jón accepted, and the farmer led him into the family-room and offered to take charge of his sack; but Jón refused this, saying that he had in it shoes which he wished to put on.

No one was tobe seen within, but the housewife who sat spinning, and, when Jón greeted her, she received his greeting shortly and coolly. Jón liked the looks of neither, and found himself, as he thought, in rather strange quarters. He was shown to a seat at one end of the room, but no meals were brought to him; the farmer, however, was all glee, and chattered away with Jón, and asked him much of his travels, getting true answers to everything; and, at last, Jón told the man that he had been fetching his inheritance from the West-firths,

The farmer took up Jón's bag, and, saying it was a goodly burden, went to his wife and had a long, stealthy talk with her, whereof Jón heard nothing but: "Bury him!"

After this they dropped the talk and the old hag, going up to Jón, bade him follow her. He did so, and she shewed him to sleep in a room apart from the others, where a wretched lair, in the shape of a bed, was given him to rest in. The good-wife wanted to take his shoes and stockings, but he said that he would sleep without doffing his clothes, as in the last days he had not slept on account of pressing business. After this, he threw himself on to the bed, and made believe to fall fast asleep, and soon got up a loud snoring.

Soon he heard a sound of steps outside the room, and anon the door opened, and he saw a huge spear aimed at him. It struck him a blow on the shoulder-bone, as he had turned himself up against the wall, and gave him a heavy wound.

At this, he leaped from the bed, and, seeing the farmer ready to deal him another blow, flew at him and seized him round the waist. Now the farmer threw away his spear, and a hard and deadly struggle began; Jón found his strength against the farmer fast failing, and thought he had never had such a trial of it. All that came in their way was kicked out of its place, the farmer sharply assailing, but Jón striving, long as he could, not to fall. And when Jón found a fit chance, he thrust himself with such force against the farmer's bosom that the latter fell on his back over the threshold.

Now Jón made the best of this fall and dealt deservedly, with fist, foot and knee, with this scoundrel, and broke his back-bone on the threshold.

At this moment, the good-wife came in and aimed at Jón with a knife in her hand, but Jón warded the blow off, and was but little hurt on his hand; then took he the dame and brought her into the family-room, where he chained her up tight, and then dragged the old man from the door, amidst roaring and screaming. After this Jón fetched his bag, and going into the family-room, took up his provisions and had a good supper, and then slept in the bed of the married couple.

Next morning, the weather was fair, and Jón started off, having first carefully locked all the doors of the farm. He now turned his course to where the law-man lived, and telling him of his welcome at the farm, showed him his wounds.

Next day, the law-man went to the farm, and found the farmer dead in the passage, and his wife in chains. On searching the houses, they found heaps of money and other treasures, not to forget the spear and the knife, both covered with blood. They also found clothes belonging to shipwrecked foreigners, which became proof of the farmer's having killed folk from wrecked ships, and stolen their goods; this farmer had also killed two travellers and robbed them of their money. The law-man took all the money found here together with the farmer's wife, to his house, and gave Jón much of the wealth; so they parted in friendship.

Jón went home, and peacefully farmed his estate and led a happy life with his wife, till death. They had many children, of whom, his three sons, Teitr, Jón, and Thorsteinn became founders of great families. And now, knowing no more of Jón, no more can we tell.

THIEVES'-CAVE.

A short distance from the highway, in a valley called Heidardalr, in the east of the country, is a cave named Thieves'-cave; said to be immensely large, although now the entrance is wellnigh blocked up.

It is told that, in days long gone by, there lived at the cottage called Litla-Heidi, a farmer who had a maid-servant, very hopeful, young, and fair-looking.

One evening, about the beginning of Advent, as the people were going to bed, she went out to take in some washing. She returned not at all that night, and, the next day, she was sought for with no avail, and equally unavailing were all searches after her.

But, after three years, at nearly the same time as that at which she had vanished, it so happened that about the close of the watch (so is called in Iceland the long sitting by lamplight from nightfall to the sleeping-hour), some people were still up, giving hay to the milch-cows.

Then the maiden came hurrying, nearly out of breath, and worn out with running, and, at the same time four people were seen who directed their course also towards Litla-Heidi, but who, seeing that folk were yet up at the farm, returned, by the wall, round the home-field.

The people were altogether astonished that the maiden, whom everyone took to be dead long ago, should now appear as suddenly as she had vanished, and that, at so strange an hour of the night. And they asked her where she had dwelt all the while, for three years.

She answered: "As I was gathering in the washing, a man of great growth came up to me, caught me, and thrust his glove into my mouth, thus preventing me from crying and calling for help. He carried me away to the east of the farm, where I saw that there were four folk togther. These took turns in bearing me off eastwards, until they came to a vast cave, whereinto they led me, and having lighted a candle, they offered me food, and made me a bed of sheepskins, this being the only kind of bedding found in the cave. In this lair they made me sleep among them. They were kindness itself to me, and I could have meals as I would, enough and good,—the which were of mutton and trout, there being nothing else to be got. They watched me so narrowly, that, when they wanted to go out to get what was needed for their home, one was always kept to watch me, which made it impossible for me to get away. Thus I lived with them for three years. The only work they wanted me to do was to wait on them, and in no way did they like me to be annoyed or distressed. I therefore thought the best plan was to feign perfect happiness, and in this way, at last, I managed to make them, to some degree, trust me. They would go little out in the daytime, but, at night, they went out hunting and fishing. In the cave there was but little of worth; they had no money, but, at times, they were wont to take sheep from different quarters and slaughter them, and to trout-fishing they gave themselves whenever they had a chance. Last autumn, they began to leave me at home by myself, when they went out for home-fishing, or sheep-snatching, but went only so far away, that they could see me if ever I left the cave. At last, they went all of them out trout-fishing, and came home wet to the skin. I had prepared hot meals for them, and, having eaten well of the food, they slept soundly, but I went to wash their clothes, as I was wont, they having no other clothes for change. I washed the clothes and wrung the water out of them, and placed them near their hands, which they had particularly ordered me never to forget doing. But, this time, I turned wrong one sleeve of their serks and jackets, and one leg of their trowsers, and, as it was not very dark, and they were all soundly asleep, I ventured to steal away, and made all the speed I possibly could; but before I had finished about half the way I heard a voice shouting after me that I should stop a little; this voice I, at once, knew to be one of theirs, and being seized with an awful fright, I sped yet more swiftly away than before, but the men got nearer and nearer to me. However, lucky it was, that, when I came here, the house was open, for they had indeed got so far as the wall of the home-field, but being aware that people here were still up, they have not dared follow me farther."

Thus it was that the maid contrived to get safe home again; and when her master had spread these news amongst his neighbours, they gathered together and came to Litla-Heidi, and asked the maid all about the cave, and whether the men had no weapons.

She said that, though their weapons were less good, they would not lack in bravery and daring boldness, and that they could, beside, so defend the door of the cave as to be all safe, for the inlet was low and narrow, and the cave wellnigh quite dark within. And, by day they were, she said, mostly within; but if they should happen be be outside, they would scarcely venture a contest with a stranger, and no one could catch them by running, for they were the fleetest of men.

The folk then agreed that the girl should go with them, and pass the door of the cave, but that they should be prepared to fight, if the thieves came out. Now they all rode to the place where the cave was, and placed themselves where they thought they had the surest stand, and the woman they let wait by the door.

This plan succeeded as they had wished. All the thieves came out, one after the other, and were stabbed to death as they appeared outside the door. And from that time, the cave has been called Thieves'-cave.

STORIES OF OUTLAWS.

ÚLFSVATN.

IN the upland wilderness, bordering on the valleys of Skagafjördr, there is a fish-lake hight Úlfsvatn, which has got its name in the following way.

At a farm called Mœlifellsá, there lived once a rich farmer, who had a son by name Gudmundr, a hopeful youth withal, strong, and well skilled in wrestling. He often joined people in searching paths and downs, and was generally the head-man, or mountain-king, as it is called in some parts of Iceland.

Once Gudmundr took part in a search after sheep, together with some other people. He had a lad with him, and in their walk they came to the lake Ulfsvatn, where they saw two lambs and began pursuing them. The lake was covered with ice, and they saw that a man was lying on the ice, fishing through a hole in it. As Gudmundr and his lad approached the lake, the fisherman got up, and seizing an axe he had lying at his side, took a swift slide over the ice towards Gudmundr.

When the lad saw this, he at once took to his heels, but Gudmundr awaited the coming of the man.

When the stranger was near enough, he dealt Gudmundr a blow with his axe; in vain, however, as Gudmundr stooped aside, and the blow missed him. But hereby the axe dropped from the outlaw's hand, and Gudmundr, seizing it, took a slide on to the frozen lake, and the outlaw after him. Now they manœuvered thus for a while, pursuing and retreating, till Gudmundr seized the chance, and dealt the man a death-blow with the axe; who, as he received the stroke, called out loud the names: "Brandr, Thorgils, Olafr!"

After this, Gudmundr went to his men, telling them what had happened. They all went to the lake, but saw nothing of the fallen man, as he had quite vanished, but they saw that he had been fetched by some other folk, and could follow the blood-trail up from the lake.

Hereafter, Gudmundr did not go in search of sheep to these wildernesses, but stayed at home, as it was thought that outlaws might be lying in wait for him.

At Mœlifellsá, it so happened, once, late in the summer, that the herdsman was ill, and none could undertake the watching of the sheep but Gudmundr.

But, once, not finding his ewes, he walked over heath and mountain, yet still nought could he see of the sheep. At this time, he was overtaken by a dense fog, and knew nothing of whither he was going, but went on, however, till he saw a large flock of sheep and a man watching it.

This was an outlaw, and he rushed at once against Gudmundr, and a fierce wrestling ensued, which ended in Gudmundr's felling his foe. Then the outlaw begged him to spare his life, declaring that he would be well rewarded for it.

Gudmundr asked who he was and where was his home.

The outlaw told him his name was Olafr, brother to the man he had slain on the lake, whose name had been Úlfr.

"We are," went he on, "six brothers, and I am the youngest and least of them all. My father lives at a farm not far hence; he has charmed you hither, for he wants to repay you the slaying of his son, and has dug a hole in the path, in front of his door, which he is going to make your quarters. We have a sister, by name Sigridr; she is the most beloved of us all by our father, and she may be of the best help to you, if she choose. My brother Brandr is here, hard by, and if you can fell us both and thus have it in your power to spare both our lives, I doubt not that she will aid you, all she can."

After this, Gudmundr allowed Olafr to stand up, and now they went to the place where Brandr was. They took at once to wrestling, and Brandr was, at last, felled by Gudmundr.

Now Brandr asked him to spare his life, promising him his help, and telling him the same as Olafr had told him. Gudmundr then let him get up, and went to the farm, where he found Sigridr outside and brought her her brother's greeting, saying that they prayed her to aid their life-giver. Sigridr then took him into the upper room of the cowhouse, and gave him wine which greatly refreshed him. She told him all about the grave in the path in front of the door, and gave him her rede to retreat from before her father, towards the grave.

"But, as you come to the edge of the hole," she said, "leap over it, thrusting my father down into it, but scathe of him neither life nor limb. Now," she went on, "my father is asleep, but he will soon awake and know that you are here, and then you shall come up in front of the house, and knock at the door."

This did Gudmundr, and as he knocked at the door, the old man awoke and said :—

"Ah! now then, at last, is Gudmundr here, and he shall surely give me a proof of his manliness."

And he rushed out; and no greetings were exchanged between him and Gudmundr, as they flew one against the other and began a desperate strife.

Gudmundr soon found that he had not more than half of the old man's strength, and therefore did nought but guard himself.

The old man wanted to drive Gudmundr before him towards the hole, and of this Gudmundr availed himself, for when he came to the brink, he leapt over the pit, and let the old man fall on his head into it.

At this time Sigridr, and the two brothers with whom Gudmundr had before wrestled, came to the fighters, and begged Gudmundr to spare their father's life, which Gudmundr promised to do, if they never would do him any more harm; whereunto the old man pledged his solemn word. After this, the old man was hauled out and thanked much Gudmundr for having spared his life, and begged him to enter, but said that, nevertheless, he knew not how his elder sons would put up with this issue of things, when they came home.

Then was Gudmundr hospitably treated, and in the evening, locked up in a separate room.

At night, when the elder brothers came home, they asked if Gudmundr was quietly resting in his hole. But their father told them all as it had passed, whereat they became so enraged that they were going to break the door of Gudmundr's room.

Their father put himself there, in their way, before the door, and said :—

"First you must kill me, before you be peace-breakers and kill Gudmundr!"

By this they were calmed down, and went to bed.

Next morning the old man showed Gudmundr to them and forbade them to do him any harm.

Gudmundr dwelt there all the winter. He looked with a loving eye on Sigridr, for she was both fair of face, and therewith of so sturdy a growth and so strong, that she could fell all her brothers. Next spring, Gudmundr longed again to return to the peopled lands, and Sigridr would accompany him, as she was with child. This her father would not hinder her doing, and forth she went with her lover, who had no rest till he came to Mœlifellsá, where all were greatly rejoiced at receiving him, as it were from the land of the dead.

Hereafter Gudmundr married Sigridr, and she was highly thought of, as a notable wife and a great shrew. Her brothers found no pleasure in living in the wilderness after her departure, and chiefly so after the death of their father; they moved, therefore, to the peopled districts, and became, some of them at least, great farmers in Skagafjördr.

The Herdsman.

Once, in former times, there lived an abbot of the monastery of Thykkoibœr, in the district of Alfstaves, in the East, who was rich in flocks, chiefly of sheep. He had a herdsman, by name Arni, the briskest and most courageous of men and the handiest of smiths besides.

Once it happened that all the abbot's sheep vanished suddenly, and, in spite of the herdsman's search everywhere, where he thought there was a chance of finding them, nothing was heard or seen of the lost sheep. This was in the early part of the autumn, and the nights were beginning to darken a little.

The abbot was grieved at his loss, but, unlike most other abbots, did not chide the herdsman for it.

Now, Arni began, one day, to make for himself a wooden staff, five ells long, and, going to the forge, wrought an arrow-shaped, sharp, spear-point, which he drove into the end of it. In the other end he fixed a two-edged spear-point, as long as the other, and very sharp; and over the latter he screwed a long cap with a knob at the end, so that nothing was seen of the spear-blade.

The abbot asked what all this meant.

Arni answered that he was going to try, once more, to recover the sheep, but that his dreams had told him it would be as well not to be staffless.

Next night, the herdsman vanished from home, and turned his walk towards the mountains. On his way, he had to cross a sandy desert, where he saw the foot-prints of many sheep and of two men, the latter being of great size. These foot-prints he followed up to where the mountain began, and as he could follow them no farther he concluded that the sheep had been driven up on to the ice mountain; wherefore he went up it, although there were no foot-prints there, to guide him.

When he had reached a certain height, he saw in the Jökull the peaks called Huldufjöll. He went towards these peaks, and when he came there, he saw that there was a valley, rather large and deep, and the slopes of the hills were all wood-grown around it; the tops of these mountains were but little higher than the glacier, and only one narrow pass made approach to the valley possible. When he came into the pass, he looked on the valley beneath, and saw on the level ground a farm and some beasts round it grazing, but, just beneath the pass, he saw all his sheep, in one lot, and two men sleeping, one at each side of the pass-entrance. This did not put him out of face; he unscrewed the cap of his staff, and then went down through the pass, and drove up all his sheep, which were willing enough to go back the same way they had come.

But when he had got a short way over the ice-field, he saw two men coming up, running after him. They had axes in their hands, and looked not at all peaceful. They at once assaulted Arni, but he, being placed between them, had no other choice than to stab the man in front with his pike-point, and the other behind at the same time with the spear-point ; and thus he left them both dead behind him.

After this, he drove his sheep over the Jökull, not being annoyed with another assault. He came home with his sheep, and told his adventure, and became a well-known man for the same. The abbot rewarded him well for his trouble, and Arni was always afterwards highly esteemed as a dauntless and brave man.

Now, it is generally thought that the valley is filled with sand, and water, and ice, and that it is unlike what it was, in those days.

UP! MY SIX, IN JESU'S NAME!

ONE autumn, six men went on a search into the sheepwalks, with their leader, who was a strong man and dauntless withal. When they had reached the farthest point of their search, a storm came on with heavy snowfall, and the men lost their way, not knowing where they were. After a long walk, they found that their path led down hill, and soon they found themselves in a small valley, and having by chance come across a house, they knocked at the door. There came out an old fellow, ugly and mighty rascally-looking, and said that it was a new thing for strangers to come and pry about his dwellings, and looked with ungleeful eye on his guests. The leader spoke for them all, and told him how they had happened to come thither: and having told the old fellow this he stepped inside the door with all his men, without waiting for the inhospitable man's leave or refusal. When they had sat for a while, meat was brought them on dishes, by a young damsel of downcast mien.

She whispered to the guests, as she gave the meat to them: "Eat only the meat at the edge of the dish farthest from you."

They looked and were soon sure that all at that edge was mutton, but all at the other, human flesh.

When they had finished, the girl removed the meat from the table, and took the wet clothes of the strangers to dry them, and said in a low voice: "Be watchful, do not take off your underclothes; neither sleep!"

It was a moonlight night, and the leader lay in a bed in the shadow, and told his comrades, that they should not move or speak aught, till he called them.

Shortly they had gone to rest, the old man came in, and going to the bedside of one of his guests, touched his breast, and said :—

"Lean breast and craven."

And in the same way he felt them all muttering the like wellnigh, at every one, till at last, when he came to the bed of the leader and had felt his breast, he said :—

"Fat breast and mettlesome."

And, in the same moment he turned to a nook in the room and seized an axe, and returned with it to the bed of the leader. But the latter, seeing what was to come, sprang nimbly down from the bed, wherein the old cannibal dealt him a blow, missing him, of course; but the leader now seized the axe, and wrung it from the wretch's hand, who roared out :—

"Up, my twelve, in the devil's name!"

Now the leader drave the axe, into the old carl's pate, and it stood in the brain, and he fell dead on the spot.

Then the leader said :—

"Up, my six, in Jesu's name!"

When he had thus called upon his followers, a trapdoor was opened in the floor, and there came up the head of a man. But the leader was not long in cutting it off, and thus he killed twelve of them in the open trap-door of a cellar which was under the floor.

After this they found the girl who had waited on them in the evening. She turned out to be a farmer's daughter from Eyjafjördr, whom the old man had stolen, and would force, against her will, to marry his eldest son. But she bore an untellable loathing towards them all, chiefly because they killed everyone that came to them, who had lost his way, and then eat his flesh.

Here the men found many precious things, and many sheep in the valley. They agreed that the leader should remain, and one man with him, to comfort the girl, and to watch the sheep during the winter, in order that they might not starve for want of care. But the others returned home.

Next spring, the leader brought the girl home, and afterwards, with the consent of her father, married her, and moved everything that he found in the valley, to the North: began farming, and lived a happy and lucky life with his wife to a high age.

FARMER JÓN AND THE OUTLAWS.

ONCE, there lived at a certain farm in Skagafjördr a farmer, by name Jón, who was poor and did not give himself much to farming, but loved travelling, heart and soul. He was a man of great bodily strength and a match for two, in whatever trial he undertook.

Once, in the autumn, he was charged with bearing letters and messages to Reykjavík. He went, over the mountains, and when he came on to one of them called Arnarvatnsheidi, he saw two men on the ice of one of the lakes, fishing for trout through a hole in the ice. Jón had a dog with him, which ran before him towards the men, one of whom seized the dog, and dashing him against a stone, killed him.

Now Jón guessed what was the matter and what he himself might expect from these fellows.

When he was a short way from the men, he heard one of them say: "Shall we not slaughter him too?"

"Certainly," said the other.

One of them was elderly-looking, the other young. The old man rushed forward to Jón, and clasped him round the waist, but the young man attacked him behind. Jón had a staff with a spike at the end of it, in his hand, and managed to stab the old man through the breast, so that he fell dead to the ground, and then he turned against the young man, and so they wrestled for a long while, and fierce and deadly was their strife, and Jón found the latter so strong a man, that he doubted whether he should ever get him under at all. But, after a long contest, he at last contrived to get him into the hole in the ice, where he sank beneath the water. However, Jón soon found that the man was not dead, for every now and then he saw his head rising above the water, and then diving at once, so he deemed that this outlaw must know how to keep himself alive under the water.

When Jón had sat there a while and taken breath, he stood up, took one of the shoes of his fallen foe, and kept it, continuing his journey southwards. He did all he had to do, and then went back by the same way, to the North. Nothing befel him on his way, but when he looked at the place where he had fought with the outlaw, he saw, that the man he had killed, had been removed from the ice. Hereafter he went home and told nobody what had happened.

Next spring, he went to the South for trading, and had a troop of horses bearing his wares to the cheaping-place. He went to a shop in Reykjavík, and as he entered, whom should he first cast eyes upon, but the man with whom he had formerly wrestled on the ice? He saw that the man was cheaping in hurried wise, and had wellnigh finished.

Jón said to him: "Ah, here we meet again my good-fellow!"

To which the other answered shortly and in a low voice, "Yes."

Jón was asked by the trading-people, if he knew the man; he gave a sherking answer, and said he thought he had seen him some time before.

The stranger then bade Jón come with him, out of the way of the folk, which Jón at once agreed to do, and he said: "In a dangerous state you left me the last time, having killed my father, and left me in the very jaws of death, in the water, but surely you were pardonable for so doing, as you had to fight for your life. Now have you told anyone, of that meeting of ours?"

Jón said he had not done so.

"Now," said the stranger, "I beg of you that you tell no one of our meeting, and hereby, I give you eight specie-dollars, and the barrel of barley yonder, that I may the more trust in your good faith; and, moreover, you must promise to come, next autumn, to Arnarvatnsheidi, just a week before winter, where we will meet again, if you like it."

"That I do not like much," answered Jón, "as you will take vengeance for your father, and kill me."

"Thereunto I am not bent," answered the other; "but I must tell you that, if I am not on the spot, the day fixed, nor yet the next day, you must wait for me no longer."

At last, Jón promised to come, and hereupon they parted, and Jón went homewards.

Some time after Jón's arrival, his wife came to him and said: "I wonder, husband, at the quantity of wares you bring with you from the South. I understand not how it is, but I hope you have not taken to what you have never done before,—increasing your husbandry by dishonesty."

"All my wares," quoth Jón, "are honestly gotten; therefore hesitate not to make meals from them and eat them."

Now the summer passed away, and the autumn came far on. Then Jón asked his wife for travelling provisions and new shoes, and said he would go South, over the mountains, in order to gather angelica. She tried to dissuade him from this journey, but with no avail, and he started with two riding-horses, and rode into the mountains, and came to the appointed place at the appointed time; here he waited all that day and night, and the next day until evening, when he saw a man who had two horses, riding with great speed towards him. He knew the outlaw he was waiting for, and they greeted one another.

The outlaw said: "I beg you will come home with me."

"Then you will have me killed," said Jón.

"That I have no wish to do," answered the other.

And having talked on the matter, Jón agreed to go with him, and forthwith they rode over the wilderness, towards the East.

All that night and the next day, they rode, till, in the evening, they came to a dale where there was a farm, and at that farm they dismounted. The outlaw took Jón into a room, apart, and going out, shut the door after him. Shortly after, a maiden came in to him, bringing food, and a good table was set before him. She showed him to a bed, and helped him to doff his clothes. He snatched at his stockings when she had got them off his feet, but she said: "I did not mean to take them away from you." More words she did not utter. He watched during the first part of the night, but later on, fell asleep and slept till it was broad daylight, when he dressed, and the girl came in bringing meals and wine, but at once went out shutting the door after her.

Now a long time passed and nobody came. Jón, therefore, went out and viewed the place, and afterwards came back to look at the inside of the farm, and found a sitting room with three women in it,—the girl who waited on him, another damsel of older mien, and an old woman, who, when she fixed her eyes on him, turned black in the face.

Jón said: "Here are silent people, and strange-looking!" but no answer was given him. After this, he bade farewell to these women, and went out again. He went round the farm, and behind the houses he heard heavy knocking going on; he there found a forge, where three men were knocking and hammering iron, and one of them was the man who had met with him on the mountain. A young man was hammering the iron, and Jón said: "Faintly-hammered;" whereat the young man flung the heavy hammer at him, saying: "Let me then see you do it better."

Jón seized the hammer as it flew at him through the air, and began hammering, and the others found him not a little manly at iron-beating.

Then the young man would run at Jón, but his outlaw friend hindered any harm from being done to him.

Afterwards, he said to Jón, taking him aside: "Now I deem you would fain return home, and when you go, I give you eight specie-dollars, and I intend to send you something before Christmas. We shall not see each other again, and I trust you to do so much for me, as to tell nobody where we live. The men you have seen here are my brothers, but I have, besides, my moth here, and two sisters. Now I will make my younger brother accompany you, but I warn you not to accost him, only to give ready answers to what he has to say to you."

They parted in friendship, and Jón thanked him for his kindly gift.

Now Jón went homewards with the young man, and a silent journey they had till they came upon Arnarvatnsheidi, not one word having been exchanged between them, up to their parting, when the young man said: "I trust you to be true to my brother in what he has bidden you; and this grey horse which I ride, he said you should have."

Jón thanked him, and said he would tell no one what had passed between them, or the place of the other's dwelling.

Upon this they parted, and Jón went home; and nothing happened until the day next before Christmas, when Jón was watching his sheep in a valley, some way from the farm. He there heard a shepherd's voice hallooing in the mountains above, and saw a man driving five wethers before him. The man waved his hat and turned up the mountain again, but the wethers ran straight on towards Jón, and one of them, which ran before the others, had a bunch of wool on its head. Jón took hold of this one, and looked at it, and found a letter from the outlaw, stuck in the wool, which said that he made a gift of these sheep to Jón. Jón killed the wethers and found that, both in flesh and tallow, they were fatter by far than sheep mostly were at that time.

Now a strange change took place in Jón's farming, after this: before, it had gone all down hill for him, but now he went on rising and rising, till he became a rich man. He never told any one this tale, but it is said that, after his death, it was found, written on a piece of paper, left among his other things, and that the leaf it was found written on was with the shoe he had taken from the outlaw. And here ends this tale.

ODDR, THE STEWARD OF HÓLAR.

ONE winter, it is said, dried fish was wanted for the household of Hólar, and that winter there was a steward by name Oddr, a stout and stalwart fellow. The bishop called Oddr to him, and gave him a good chiding for his want of foresight; for the house lacked fish, and none was to be got in the whole North-country. Then the bishop ordered several horses to be shod, to equip a caravan to the South, for purchasing fish, and Oddr was to be the leader of it. But Oddr, having waxed peevish at the bishop's chiding, and well knowing that the same quantity of fish had been purchased for the house, as usual, and that the meal-women were the cause of all this,—said he would have nobody with him, there being no good in many folk's looking after the horses. The bishop thought this a bad plan, but nevertheless let Oddr have his will.

Oddr had a dog, a large and strong beast, and so wise that he had the wit of a man.

He took his dog with him, and nothing is told of his journey to the South. He managed well to purchase fish enough to load all his horses, and now started off again up to the North. But when he had been a short time on the mountains, a storm and heavy snowfall came on, with darkness, and very soon he missed the road and the right direction, and knew not whither he went. Shortly after, he found himself in a deep valley, through which he passed for a while, till he came to a great river; this crossed, he went on till he came to a little cottage, where he knocked at the door, and out came a man, tall of growth and rascally-looking.

Oddr greeted him and asked him if he were the head-man of this dwelling.

The other declared he was so.

Oddr asked for shelter here during the night, and pasture for his horses, to which the man said he was welcome. Oddr saw that his dog did not like the farmer, but looked fiercely at him, snarling and shewing his teeth now and then. For this Oddr did not care, but unloaded his horses, and hobbled them a short way from the farm, and then called his dog, which he wanted to keep close to himself. But the animal was not to be prevailed upon, and lay down by the horses and stayed growling there.

Oddr went to the house, and the farmer waited for him at the door, and begged him to step in. This he gladly agreed to, and the farmer led him into the dwelling-house, where there reigned the blackest darkness. Oddr was shown to a seat at the side of the family-room, and the farmer sat down on another, hard by. No entertainment of any kind was given to Oddr, nor was he begged to change his wet clothes, neither was he aware of any persons being in the house besides the farmer, who chattered away, and asked Oddr many questions about the people in the inhabited parts, and on what errand he had gone to the South. Oddr gave a true answer to everything.

After a while he noticed that the farmer's voice became more and more drowsy and heavy, and that, at last, he dropped off into a sound sleep, snoring loudly.

At this moment, a flash of light, which could be accounted for in no natural way, lighted up the room, so that Oddr could see all over it.

And as he looked up, he saw above the bed upon which he was sitting, a great flat stone; on its undermost side he observed a sharp edge standing out, but from the upper side of the stone a cord stretched up to one of the rafters, and thence to the bed where the farmer was sleeping. He saw too, that the farmer had the rope in his power, and that anyone on whom the stone might fall, was unfailingly lost. He now thought his quarters were not highly likely for a night's rest, and it would be as safe to get away while the farmer slept. He stole quietly out, and lo! when he was abroad, the weather was clear and bright, and when he came to the horses, he found that his dog had driven them all to the baggage and had gnawed off all the hobbles. Now Oddr made all the speed he could, and when he had got up all the loads, the dog rushed at the horses and drove them back the same way that they had come.

But when Oddr was over the river, he saw the farmer coming with a huge shining spear in his hand, who, when he got to the river, hurled the spear over it, aiming at Oddr's waist. Oddr stooped aside from the weapon, and it stuck in one of the loads, doing no harm.

Then said the farmer:—

"Great is thy luck, Oddr, to have escaped scatheless, for thou shalt know that, by my charms, thou art here, as I intended to kill thee. But I see now, that thou art not alone in the game, for by thine own wit and strength, thou wouldst never have escaped. Take now, the great spear home to Hólar, in remembrance of our meeting, and I let the spell go with it, that never shall Hólar be in want of fish, while the spear is there."

At this, the farmer returned, exchanging no hearty farewells with Oddr, who travelled on luckily till he came to Hólar and was well received by the bishop. He asked Oddr about his journey, but the latter said that he had nothing to tell, worthy of note.

The bishop said: "Thou hast been in life-peril, and thou need'st not hide the thing from me; for thou would'st surely have come short, if I had been nowhere present."

Then Oddr told the truth, and shewed, as a proof, the huge spear.

This spear is yet kept at Hólar, and no one has ever heard, at any time since, that that place has been in want of dried fish.

BJARNI SVEINSSON AND HIS SISTER SALVÖR.

A MAN was hight Sveinn. He was a farmer in Skagafjördr, and a married man, but the name of his wife is not given. He was well off and had two children who are mentioned in this story, a son, by name Bjarni, and a daughter called Salvör. These were twins, and deeply loved each other.

At the time of this tale, they were about twenty years of age.

One summer, about midsummer night, it so happened, that many of the Skagafjördr people went into the mountains and wildernesses, to gather Icelandic moss. Farmer Sveinn intended to let his son go with the others, but, when Salvör heard of it, she would, by all means, go also. To this the parents objected, but gave their leave to it at last, for Salvör's entreaties: and thus, they both had leave to go to the mountains.

The night before, farmer Sveinn had a dream, that he had two white birds and loved both of them dearly; and he thought, in his dream, that he lost the she-bird and sorely missed it. Sveinn interpreted his dream, that he would soon lose his daughter, and this gave him not a little anxiety. And now he would prevent her from going to the moss-gathering, but she abated not in her entreaties until she had coaxed him to let her go.

Now these loving young folk went into the wildernesses, and the first day, they gathered moss, like the others, very happy and always together. But, the next night, Salvör fell suddenly ill, and could not go with the other people, on the morrow. Bjarni therefore waited on his sister in the tent. Thus three days passed, and Salvör grew worse and worse. The fourth day, Bjarni got some of the other folk to stay with his sister in the tent, and went out alone from it. When he had filled his bag with moss, he sat down under a great stone, and leaned his cheek against his hand, thinking of his sister's illness, deeply grieved, and full of fear for the dear one's life. After he had sat a little while, he heard a great din, and, looking round, saw two men riding up to him, with mighty speed, one on a chestnut horse, dressed in red, the other on a black one, dressed in black. They dismounted at the rock, and saluted Bjarni by name.

The one dressed in red asked Bjarni what grieved him.

This, Bjarni would not tell him; but at the man's assuring himthat it would not be the worse for him to tell him the truth, he said that his sister's illness was the cause of his sorrow.

"And now our companions are going away," said Bjarni, "and I shall be left alone with my suffering sister, and I know not at what moment she may die in my arms."

"You are indeed in distress, Bjarni," said the man in red, "and I heartily pity, and grieve with you. But will you not give me your sister?"

"Nay," answered Bjarni, "that I surely will not,

not knowing anything about you, not knowing whence you come. Whence are you?"

"That is no business of yours," said the other, and took from his pocket a snuff-box of gilded silver with a jewel in the lid, and said: "Will you not sell your sister for this snuff-box?"

"Nay," answered Bjarni, "for no price at all will I give her to you."

"Very well," quoth the man, "but take this box as a present from me, and as a token that you have met a stranger in the mountains."

Bjarni took the box and thanked the man for his gift.

The stranger then took leave of Bjarni, who went home to the tent.

Next morning, Bjarni's companions returned homewards and left him alone with his sister. He did not dare to sleep, fearing that the stranger might steal Salvör from him. All that day, Bjarni watched over her, but the ensuing night, the all-conquering sleep so waxed upon him, that he could keep awake no longer, and lying down by his sister, he embraced her and clasped his arms round her, hoping thus to feel, for sure, that she would not be taken away from him without his knowledge. Now he fell fast asleep.

But when he awoke, lo! his sister was away. He was seized with untellable sorrow, and searched, all that day, weeping and crying for the loss of his sister; but all in vain. And at night he took his horse, and rode home to his parents, and told them the grievous news.

"This was long my foreboding," said Sveinn: "something always will bring about what is to be."

Now men were gathered from all quarters to search for Salvör, but in spite of close searching, nothing was found of her. All partook in the loss and grief; for the maiden was the most hopeful of women, and the charm of all.

Now time passed until Bjarni was thirty years of age, married, and had begun farming.

One autumn, his herdsman missed all the sheep. He searched for three days and found nothing. Bjarni then bade his wife prepare provisions for him, for a week, and good shoes, as he was going, himself, in search of his sheep. His parents were yet alive, and begged him not to go. But he bade them fear not, and not to look for him, till after a week. So he went off and walked continually for three days and three nights, till he came to a cave, where he lay down to sleep. When he awoke, a dark fog covered all the land around him. He did not, however, hesitate to continue his walk, but after a while he lost his way, and knew neither where he was nor whither he went. After a long and wearisome walk, he found himself in a large valley; and on the level ground there was no fog; and now he saw in the valley a farm of goodly size, with lofty buildings. He turned his steps thither, and saw men and women engaged in haymaking on the meadows outside the home-field. He went up to the women, who were all together three, one being of a nobler look than the rest. He asked them if they thought he could get a night's rest at the farm.

They all answered Yes, and one of them, a girl of fair look, went with him home to the farm.

It seemed to Bjarni that this woman had some likeness to his sister, whom he had formerly lost on the mountain. And now, that whole affair was recalled to his mind, and passing through his memory, it roused many a sorrowful feeling in his breast, but he let not the young girl see any marks of his renewed grief.

Now they came to the farm-house, and the girl took Bjarni in, and shewed him into a room, large and beautifully fitted up, and putting a chair for him, bade him sit down. After that, she went out, but returned in a moment with meats and wine, which she put on the table before Bjarni. When he had partaken of the meal, the girl led him to his sleeping-room, in which there was a good bed ready for him. Bjarni went to bed, and the girl, taking his wet clothes, bade him good-night.

Now Bjarni began thinking in his bed, where he possibly could be, and how this lovely young maiden could recall to him the memory of his former sorrow; and, in the midst of all his sad thoughts he dropped to sleep. Soon after, he awoke, hearing singing going on in the house. He then heard that on the floor above his bed, folk were gathered to family prayer, as wont is in Iceland. Many sang there, both men and women, but one voice excelled all the others. This voice entirely stirred up from the bottom, the deep sorrow of Bjarni, as the voice seemed to him to be that of Salvör, his sister, who, thought he, could surely, by no means be here. For a while he pondered over this, then slept again soundly, till the little maiden, who had waited on him the evening before, roused him up, in the broad daylight of a sunny, beautiful morning. She brought him good clothes, persuading him to stay there, that day, which was a Sunday. Then the girl went out.

While Bjarni was dressing, a boy entered the room, in a coat of blue cloth; he was well-looking, and greeted Bjarni, and was kindly to him.

"What are you journeying for?" said the lad.

"I am searching for sheep," said Bjarni.

"I am not aware of their being in this valley," the boy answered; "you will stay with us to-day and tarry here a little, for my father is going to perform service in the church."

At this time, the girl opened the door and said: "Sveinn, do not tire the man with your chatter!"

She then brought meals to the table, for Bjarni, and when he had taken a good breakfast, went out. Now Bjarni saw a large gathering of people streaming to the church, and the lad, taking him by the hand, led him to the church and shewed him to a seat. Then Bjarni, recognized at his side, on looking round, the red-dressed man who had formerly met him on the mountains.

But the priest he saw to be the man who had been dressed in black. Many folk were in the church, and most of the men were rascally-looking, and of giant's growth. Some were dressed in sheep-brown knit-clothes.

Now Bjarni took forth his costly box, and offered his neighbour a pinch of snuff, which he accepted.

In the middle seat of the church, Bjarni saw a woman, of noble look and dress, and thought that he recognized his sister Salvör. They gazed one at the other, and it seemed as if she smiled and wept by turns. And now Bjarni deemed that he knew how this mystery was to be explained, and that he was, in truth, with his sister.

Service over, the lad took Bjarni by the hand, and led him out. And, after a while, the red-clothed and black-clad men came in, greeting Bjarni friendlily and asking him if he knew them. He answered that he did so, but a cloud passed over his mind, as this recalled to him the time of his awful trial, the loss of his dear sister.

At this moment, the woman came in, whom he had seen in the church and thought to be his sister. She flung herself, at once, into his arms and said :—

"In our mother's womb, we embraced each other; weeping, and amidst showers of tears, I was torn from thy bosom, brother; but now I fling myself, smiling for ioy, on that same breast."

Having greeted each other thus touchingly, Bjarni began telling her all that had passed in Skagafjördr, in the meanwhile, since her disappearance.

Then the red-clad man said: "I took formerly thy sister, Bjarni, out of thy embracing arms, and married her to this man, clad in black. He is my son, and priest over us, dale-dwellers; but I am their magistrate. Now, I have taken your sheep, and led you astray hither, by my spells, that you might have the chance of seeing your sister, and that you could tell one another your life's story since your parting. To-morrow, I shall guide you away and give you your sheep, but to-night you will stay with us and speak with your sister.

Next morning, Bjarni parted, with many tears, from his sister. The man dressed in red accompanied him, and they drove the sheep before them. The man clad in black also went with them, and now they guided him nearly down to the peopled land. Then they parted, begging to be mutually remembered. The man in black said to Bjarni :—

"I will send for you, next spring, when moving-day arrives, to be ready to settle in our valley and live with us."

Now came Bjarni home, and told his parents and wife all about his journey, but bade them by all means keep it secret. Moving-day arrived, and three men, with many horses, came to Bjarni, and, the next night, he moved all his things, and went, with parents, and wife, and children, to the valley, where a meeting of great joy and pleasure took place between the kinsmen and Salvör.

Bjarni lived here a long time, but, when he had grown old, he returned to Skagafjördr, and told there all this tale; and died at a good high age.

OLAFR OF ADABÓL.

A MAN named Einar Magnússon, lived at a farm called Storinúpr, in Midfjardar-dalir. He had a daughter, by name Sigridr, and a servant, by name Olafr, who was his herdsman. This man was as young as Einar's daughter, and had been fostered by Einar, and was, at an early age, a strong and well-grown fellow.

The farmer's daughter was the fairest-looking of women, and a highly accomplished girl. Olafr,—says the tale—was in love with Sigridr, and they promised, one to the other, unbroken faith till the end; but she said to him:—

"It is hard to see whether we shall enjoy our love undisturbed, but if I am to be given to any, I choose thee, and none else."

This they sealed with a secret oath, but none knew aught about it, save they themselves.

Farmer Einar was the owner of several farms in the parish, and being very rich in flocks and herds, needs must be that he had a faithful and able herdsman.

Einar himself, was an able and diligent farming-man; he sent, every spring, people into the mountains, to gather Icelandic moss, and thus did he, in every way, provide for his household, with great foresight and skill.

One spring, as usual, his people went to the mountains, to gather moss, and the farmer's daughter also, being, at the time, eighteen years of age. After a while, the farmer's daughter fell ill, and was so heavy and faint, that she could not go on with the other folk, who all left the tent for moss-gathering. But, when they had gone a short way from the tent, it came on with fog and foully dark, damp weather, which lasted till evening. Then it cleared up a little, but the people first returned on the following morning. When they got back, Sigridr had vanished, and nobody knew where she had gone to, but they guessed that, having got better, she might have gone away for moss-gathering. They did not, with this idea, go in search of her, and, as they were very sleepy, they fell asleep and slept till night-fall, when Sigridr had not yet returned. Thereat they were amazed, and began searching for her; and, having looked, for three days, with no avail, they gave up all search, returned from the mountain, and told Sigridr's father what had happened. At this, Einar was greatly shocked, and everybody bewailed with him the loss of his daughter. And now, no less than thirty people were gathered together to go into the mountains in search of her; they went on with this for more than a week, and found nothing. Olafr was with them, and lamented sorely the loss of his bride, and so heavy became his sorrow that he could scarcely bear it, and would leave the farmer, and the farm, where all was empty and hateful to him without his Sigridr.

But the farmer told him that he could not, by any means, get on without him, and so persuaded him to stay, and thereafter he was the farmer's servant and head-manager for seventeen years, never thinking of marrying any more.

One autumn, it happened that Einar missed seventy wethers, and search having been made for them in all ways, without result, Olafr offered the farmer to go himself in search of them, about the time of winter-nights. The farmer gave him provisions for a fortnight and three pairs of new leather shoes, as he intended to walk, and not to have horses with him. He went into the mountains and walked for three days in good weather, and had reached the mountain Lángi Jökull the third day. But nought had he found yet, and now the clouds began to gather, in a calm, gloomy air, the snow began to fall, and Olafr lost his way and wandered astray, until he came into a valley. He knew nothing of where he was, but walked, however, along the valley, and soon began to feel worn and weary. Walking on, he came, at last, to some rocks, and having passed along them for a while, he found a farm, enclosed by so high a wall, that he could nowhere climb over it. At last, he found a gate, and through it he went. He first came to several pens, and next he saw the farm, consisting of lofty houses, and so high were the windows placed that he could not reach to them. He then knocked at the door, and there came out a young maiden. He asked for a night's rest here, and she went in, but returned immediately, telling him he was welcome to it. She led him to the guest-room, and took his wet clothes, and then gave him a good supper. He went to his bed, a very good one, and soon slept soundly, but awoke after no long time, on hearing song and prayer going on near his room. After the reading, he heard that a man entered the house and greeted another as magistrate, asking him when he was going to kill the sheep from the peopled district, and saying that he was weary of standing over them all day long, as they were not able to bear such hardship as the other sheep in seeking their pasture: there was no hardiness, he said, in these house-wont beasts. The magistrate answered that they would soon be killed, or got rid of in some other way. At this, they dropped the matter, and Olafr slept, and did not awake till late the next morning. By this time the farmer had got up, and Olafr knew nothing of him, until suddenly a noble-looking man, in a scarlet tunic, entered the room. He greeted Olafr with great joy and wished him good-morning. Next entered the girl and brought dry shoes and stockings for him. After this, Olafr got up, and the man of noble looks asked him about his journey, his name and his family. Olafr told him the truth, and said he was searching for his fosterfather's wethers.

"Are you a single man?" asked the farmer.

"Yes, I am," answered Olafr.

The farmer then asked how old he was, and Olafr told him that his age was thirty-six years. The farmer wondered that he, being so hopeful a man, and fine of growth and face, should yet continue single. Olafr said there was a certain cause for it, and at the other's enquiry concerning this cause, told him the whole story of the loss of his betrothed bride, and how he had no more a mind to marry.

The farmer said, this was a wrong rede, and that folk often married, in spite of some misfortune having put an end to their first intention, and added, that this plan of his would never do. "I will," said he "give you my daughter, who is here. She is in no way beneath Sigridr, her mother, and I must tell you that I have caused the loss of the latter, and that she is my wife now, and you cannot hope to marry her. But our daughter is not, by any means, inferior to her mother. I have also caused the loss of the sheep you are searching, in order to get you hither to me. I now offer you my daughter to wife, that your later change of mind may prove a rich recompense for your lost first love. And so shall I furnish you from my hand, that you be quite content. I am the head-man of the folk in this valley, which contains eighteen farms. We have one priest, a strange old fellow and well skilled in ancient arts. He holds service in church, every holy-day, and the people must needs come to church in good numbers, for he smells at everyone in the church and tells by the smell whether any stranger has come into this valley. Now no one must see you here, besides ourselves; but I have a man who is seeking my horses; him I send in my stead to church, the next Sunday."

After this, he bade Olafr with him to table. They went, then, to the farmer's eating-room, and there he saw Sigridr his old friend, and so they all fell to talking.

Olafr rested there that day, in fine weather. After breakfast, the farmer took Olafr to a high hill and shewed him over all the valley, and a beautiful view it was, the land being fine and rich, and the buildings good. At last, it came to the point, that Olafr wooed the farmer's daughter, Sigridr, hight after her mother. Next day, the weather was fine, and the farmer ordered two horses to be saddled for himself and Olafr, and off they rode till they came to a large flock of sheep, watched by a man. Olafr at once recognized his master's wethers, and the herdsman now moved off with the flock, towards the peopled districts, driving them down before Olafr and the farmer, his father-in-law to be. They went on till they came to a cave, where they dismounted and took rest, having refreshed themselves with the meals wherewith they were provided.

Here, the farmer said to Olafr:—

"Now you recognize the district and know the way, and here we shall part. This winter, the farmer of Adalból will die, and thus will that farm become vacant. But you shall get from your master the lease of that farm; that will be accomplished with ease. Take two men and two maids, and one shepherd-boy, and move, with all your things, to the farm in due time. Thereafter, you shall come on a certain day to me, with seven pack-horses, only taking with you your shepherd-boy, who will be of scanty wit. You shall have from me your wife's dowry, and whatever else you stand in need of for farming."

Olafr promised to do this faithfully, and thereat they parted. Olafr went on till he reached home, where he was welcomed by his master and all his friends, who thought they had got him, as it were, out of the very jaws of death. All that he told of his journey was, that he had found the sheep scattered all over the mountains.

Now winter advanced, and the farmer of Adalból died, but his widow, who found herself unable to go on with the farming, gave up the farm.

One day, Olafr spoke to his master, Einar, and asked him to yield him the lease of Adalból, as he would marry and farm.

"How is it," said Einar, "that you, who have no more than this of loose property, think of beginning farming?"

Olafr answered that that part of the matter was his own affair.

Einar said: "Then you are going to leave me."

"I am so," said Olafr; "and I very much wish your aid in putting everything straight for me, and supplying me with what I lack for beginning a farmer's life."

Einar said it should so be, and gave him his lease-contract; and now Olafr followed strictly the mountaineer's counsels, and moved in the spring to the farm, with two men, and two maids, and a shepherd-boy, and afterwards asked Einar to lend him seven pack-horses with pack-saddles and ropes, which he easily obtained, and then started off with his shepherd-lad, a witless and faint-hearted fellow, and found, at the cave before told of, the mountain-dweller, and his own affianced bride. Many folk had gathered together there, and the shepherd-boy was mightily fearful, and did not dare, by any means, to approach the people, but hid himself under the heaped-up pack-saddles, which Olafr had taken off the horses, a short distance from the cave.

But Olafr mingled with the mountaineers, and the meeting was one of great joy. The father-in-law paid readily out his daughter's dowry, in beasts and costly things. Olafr received an hundred ewes, eighty wethers, ten horses with pack-saddles and ropes, and two riding horses of exceeding goodly quality. He moved from the cave, with twenty horses laden with butter, meat, tallow, curds, wool and other appurtenances of housekeeping.

As they parted, the father said to him: "We part, but I should have liked to see you off, furnished with everything you could want; however, before you go to market this summer, call here for some wool, with seven unladen pack-horses. You shall not marry before next autumn, and here is your future wife's certificate of baptism, and her other certificate of vaccination. Keep both well. Now, if it should so happen, as I guess it will, that your priest refuse to perform the ceremony of marriage, you shall go to the dean, and give him this letter from me; he will then readily perform the ceremony, for he is a school-fellow of mine, and a good acquaintance, but our friendship was broken off by a mishap of mine, whereby I was compelled to become an outlaw. This autumn do you fetch some wethers from me to kill; but your own wethers you can sell, and make money out of them. Here are eighty rix-dollars in specie, for which you can buy three cows; and now, I hope you are in a state which enables you to get on for the present in farming."

Hereupon, they parted in great love, and nothing is told of Olafr's journey, till he came home with his bride, who was, he said, from the East-country. The shepherd-boy told nought of their travels, but that he had seen many people and had had fat mutton to eat. Now Sigridr performed a wife's duties, at Olafr's new abode, with wonderful skill and ability, and was looked on as a lovely woman withal, and accomplished, no less than had been her mother Sigridr. Before the haymaking season, Olafr went to the well-known cave, and there got wool enough to load seven horses, and took it home. He sold it to the merchants, and made a wondrous good trade out of it. He did everything as he was advised hy his father-in-law. When Olafr applied to his priest to perform the wedding ceremony, he refused to do it. So Olafr had to apply to the dean, who, after reading the letter which Olafr gave him, smiled and declared himself ready to help Olafr out of the difficulty: and accordingly, having tried Sigridr's knowledge in her catechism, which proved her to be a perfect and thorough Christian, he married the couple, and a great and noble wedding feast followed.

After this, Olafr went to his father-in-law, found him at the cave, and received from him eighty old wethers. Olafr returned with them home and killed his meat.

Now Olafr went on farming for a long while, and his farm and household things were in a great and flourishing state, and he became, as time passed, very rich. Olafr and Sigridr had many children, and a great family has descended from them, in the West-country.

Thus ends the tale.

OLÖF, THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

IN former times, it is said that there was a married priest in Eyjafjördr, who had several children, and had taken a poor farmer's daughter as his foster-child. Her name was Olöf, a maiden fair of look and very courteous. The priest loved her quite as much as his own children, and had her taught all sorts of handiwork, and such other things as were deemed becoming for a woman to know. At this time Olöf was grown-up.

Now, the priest, her fosterfather, got a living in the East-country, and moved thither with all his goods, and his wife, children, and servants, in the early summer. It is said that he would go the shortest way, through the wilderness. He left the inlandest farm in a valley, called Bádardalr, and intended next to bait in the midst of the great lava-district called Odádahraun. At night, the priest reached the baiting-place, with all his company, and pitched his tent. But when he had rested there a little while, forth came a band of nine men in arms, from the lava. Of greetings and good-evenings there was no exchange for the outlaws fell at once upon the priest and his company, and a speedy change was soon seen, as the priest and his folk were all weaponless. The robbers killed every man's child, but Olöf: her they moved away to their dwelling, which was not very far off. Olöf soon saw that these fellows were outlaws, living by robberies and thefts, and she wailed and deplored her position, which it was not within her power to change or to better. They did her no harm, but would make her sojourn as pleasant as they possibly could. They told her that, when winter should approach, they would draw lots, whose she should be, but that in the meanwhile she should make their meals and wait on them. Olöf liked one of them the best: he was the youngest and mildest-looking of them all.

Now the summer passed, till a fortnight before the autumnal search of the commons and sheep-walks; and then the men prepared themselves to go away from home for a week, that they might gather sheep from the commons, for winter provisions. But, some few days before they left, the youngest fell ill, and must needs keep his bed. When the day came, for their departure, he was a little better, but still not up to the journey with them, and it was agreed upon that he should follow them, if he got better.

Now the men started off, and when they had got fairly out of sight, the young man spoke to Olöf in the following way: "I do not wonder that you are unhappy in our company; and I should have helped you long ago, and got you off, if I had seen the slightest possibility of doing so. I must tell you, that I have been stolen by these fellows, from the peopled land; for I am the son of a farmer in Mjóidalr. I have been here two years, and have never yet found a chance of escaping; they keep me with them for robberies and thefts, but always against my will. I feigned to be ill, in order to get a chance of speaking with you, alone, and that we might be able, perhaps, to plan some escape from this hideous company. I would that you should, at least, try to get away, while the men are from home, although it is a great risk; and you must strictly follow the advice I now give you. To-morrow, I am going away to the cave-folk, as they have bidden me, and, two days after my departure, you must be ready to start. When you come out of the door, you will see a piebald horse; take it, and bridle it, and put on it a saddle which you will find in the house. The horse is mine, the best and speediest of horses. No other horse belongs to the robbers. Mount the horse, and let it have its own will as to the way to be taken, but do not lash it, except your life be at stake: beware, also, of leaving, before the time I have told you. If you should get to the peopled land, I beg you to do all in your power, that this lot of misdoers be destroyed. But this is not easy, for they are watchful and wary.

You must not think of it before next autumn. When the men go sheep-gathering in the autumn, they are wont to rest in a little dale, near Skjálfandafljót, the night on which people mostly go on the first search for sheep. That is the time when it is easy to attack these robbers. But, if you value, at all, these counsels, and if they should prove enough for your freedom, then try to contrive, that the man who lies apart from the others in the dale, be pardoned, and granted his life and freedom. Do now as I have bidden you, and if you do not stray from my rede, luck and happiness will go with you."

Olöf thanked him for all this, and said she would follow his advice. Now, he went his way from home, but she sat alone, left behind, impatient. And now she found the life more irksome than ever before, and the next day she found longer than a whole year. The next day, she could contain herself no longer, but went out, in search of the piebald horse. She found it, not far from the house, and, as she could not understand how it would make any difference if she went one day before the fixed time, ventured to start off; and all went smoothly, till, all of a sudden, she heard a shout not far from her, and guessed from the sound of the voice that there was one of the cave-folk near. And true enough it was, for one of them had seen her passing, and recognized the horse she rode. He therefore cried, in a mighty hurry, to his companions, who, after a short while, came all together, and had got so near up to her, that a short space only was left between the pursued and the pursuers; for the men ran as swiftly as birds fly, and, although her horse was indeed a fleet one, she saw that they would soon overtake her. She therefore determined to give him a stroke with her whip, and when she did so, the beast took so mightily to his feet that she had nearly fallen off. Now the horse, going half again as swiftly as before, soon left the cave-men far behind, and sped to the farm of Mjóidalr, where the young man's father was still alive. Olöf told him all about her travels, and also where his son was staying, and the advice he had given her for duly overcoming the robbers.

Now the next winter and summer passed away.

In the autumn, the neighbours gathered together in order to destroy the cave-folk at the right time, and Olöf was to lead the expedition. And,—to tell it in short,—the men were all killed except that one who was outermost in the dale, the farmer's son from Mjóidalr. He went home with the expedition, to his father, but, because he had been, for so long a time, partaker in these folk's misdeeds, he was judged, at the next Althing, to be guilty of death, and it was left to the king's mercy what to do with him. He was to sail, the next autumn, by a vessel from Akureyri, a village in the North. Many bewailed his fate, and Olöf not least, for people affirmed that they were secretly very good friends. Before the young man embarked, he turned to Olöf, and begged her not to marry for five years, if she had no news of him during that time. But she gave him no answer, nor did she, seemingly, pay any heed to his words.

Now time passed on, and Olöf stayed with her kin in Eyjafjördr. Many hopeful youths wooed her, as she was above all the women in those parts of the country, but she refused to enter into married life with anyone, saying that marriage was not her intention. This strange conduct people ascribed to her melancholy, and to a sort of madness which her stay in the dismal cave-company might have brought upon her, and thus they ceased courting her.

The five years passed away, and, in the sixth, there came a vessel from foreign countries, to Eyjafjördr, and on board of it there was a fine-looking youth who spoke Icelandic. He was appointed by the king to the empty seat of over-law-man in Vadla-district. This young man soon became popular and beloved in all the district. When he had been there for a short time, he wanted to get himself a farm and a housekeeper—nay, even a wife,—to take care of his domestic affairs.

All pointed to Olöf as being the fittest of women in those parts, for that, but told him, at the same time, her strange and stubborn determination not to marry. The magistrate said he would try, and see what her determination came to when he was the man concerned, and, accordingly, asked Olöf to wife, who at once gave him a decisive denial. But by the assiduous entreaties of the magistrate, and the influence of many good people, she yielded at last, and gave a very unwilling consent.

Now a grand wedding-feast was prepared, and, in the midst of the gay company gathered at table, the magistrate rose, and said: "I hereby make it known to all, that I am the farmer's son, of Mjöidalr, and was taken with the outlaws of Odádahraun, prisoner, and given up to the king's mercy, when the sentence of death had been passed upon me by the court of the Althing. When the king heard the story of my life, and my answers to all questions on the matter, he not only pardoned me, but aided me in finishing my schooling; and in three years I acquired so much knowledge in laws and in the law-affairs of the country, that I was found fit to be entrusted with my present office. It gives me no little pleasure, that the woman sitting at my side should be the same who formerly saved my life when the other men were killed, and that a chance has been afforded to me thus to reward her virtue and constancy.

All marvelled at these words, for they thought the farmer's son had been dead long ago.

The feast was a gay one, and the young couple began a happy farming, at a fine and good farm, in Eyjafjördr, and lived in joy and content, to a high old age.

The Shepherdess from Ábœr.

At a farm called Ábœr, in the sequestered valleys which reach up to the wildernesses from Skagafjördr, there lived, once, a married couple, who had no children of their own, but had taken and fostered a girl, whom they loved very dearly. When the damsel grew older, she was deemed the most hopeful of women. In summer, she used to watch the ewes, and she performed the task with great ability and faithfulness.

One summer, the time being very foggy, some of the sheep were lost day after day, and, one day especially, many were missing. At the farm there lived only the married couple, this girl and one manservant. The girl had searched repeatedly for the missing ewes, in vain, but now she provided herself with victuals and new shoes, saying that she would not stop till she had found the sheep, if there was any chance at all. She walked into the mountain wildernesses, and up to the Jökulls, and at last lost her way in the fog, not knowing whither she went. She continued, however, to walk till, at last, she came to a mountain-edge, beneath which a valley opened to the view. She stepped down the mountain-slopes into the valley; and now the fog slowly vanished. She followed the course of a river which ran down into the valley, till she saw some farms, and felt assured that the valley was peopled. To the farm which seemed to her the largest and best built, she went, and when she knocked at the door, out came a young man, fair of look, who received her greeting kindly. She begged him to go to the master and mistress and crave a night's rest for her. He went in but, in a moment, returned, and told her that she was welcome to it. He then took her into the family-room, where she saw a good many folk. Having greeted all, courteously, she was shewn to a seat. The young man then began entertaining her, and said that that valley was inhabited by fifty-two persons, who lived in six different farms; and that his father was their foreman and did justice among them. Then he asked on what errand she was, and when she had told him, he answered: "I had no need to ask you about this, for I knew your errand well; and now I must tell you that I have caused you to come astray hither, for I have repeatedly, and over and over again, seen you, although you have seen nought of me. You have always been the object of my deep love, and I have chosen you for my wife, long ago. Now, would I know what answer you will give to this. But your ewes are here, and none of them missing." She answered in an unwilling way, mostly objecting that her foster-parents did not know what had become of her.

He said: "I shall make that good, by writing a letter and fixing it between the horns of one of the ewes, and then get a man to drive all the sheep to your home."

This he did; but, although she did not much complain aloud, she was far from being easy in mind. At the same farm, there lived a married couple who had been stolen from the peopled land; they loathed their stay in this lonely place and would run away, but could not accomplish it. To that end, they had made a secret passage, underground, from the house, up to the mountain, which was a mighty undertaking. The young maiden became acquainted with them, and they pitied her much, and wanted to help her, but there was a great difficulty to deal with. They told her that, if she escaped, it would cost the lives of all the people in the valley, and it had been this thought which had prevented themselves from carrying out, hitherto, their scheme of flight.

Now the girl dwelt there for a fortnight, and was closely watched, that she might have no chance of escape. She knew, however, where the secret underground passage opened, and, one night, contrived to enter it, without anyone's knowledge; and now she walked as best she could, till she got out of it at the mountain. After this, she went on in a direction which chance determined, not knowing, herself, which would be the right way to turn, and, at last, after a long and wearisome walk, she came down into Eyjafjördr, on the eastern side of the river that runs through it, and arriving at a farm, dwelt there.

Next summer, two day-labourers came to this same farm, just before the haymaking time, offering the farmer their services. The farmer would only have one of them but not the other: they wanted, however, to be both together at the same farm. He therefore took them both—each for a week in turn. The girl thought that she knew one of them for the young man who had spoken to her in the valley, and therefore she avoided being alone. But, one morning, it so happened that, many guests having come, she was obliged to milk the ewes, alone. She had not begun milking, when both the men came to the fold and began addressing her. Then said the younger of them: "How many ewes have you got to milk?"

She answered: "Fifty-two."

He asked again: "What does he deserve who kills them all?"

She said she did not well know.

Then he asked, what he would deserve who had caused the death of fifty-two people.

"About that I need give no decision, I trust," answered she.

Then the elder of the men would have killed her, but the younger prevented him from so doing, and they left her.

Now, time passed without anything new happening, till the farmer went to market, leaving none at home but the girl, and two maids, and both the day-labourers. The latter were cutting grass while the women were raking, one dark, foggy evening. The maids went home to do the evening-tasks at the farm, and left the girl alone raking, trusting that in so thickly dark a fog she would not be seen. But no sooner had the maids left her, than both the men came up to her; but she, in a fit of mad fright, ran off, with all her might, towards the river, and would, in her deadly fear, have flung herself into it, had not the younger of the men caught her on the very edge of the bank, and calmed her by saying that she need not commit self-murder, as he was going to do her no harm.

Then he gave her the choice of two things: Firstly, to marry him on the understanding that he should kill their first-born child; or, secondly, to suffer immediate death at his hands, on that very spot. She chose the first, and thereupon the men went to their scythes and she to her raking.

When the men were on the eve of leaving the farmer, after the haymaking season had passed, the younger one said to him: "One favour do I ask of you, farmer: that you will get me a good farm, on lease, somewhere in this neighbourhood, and procure me all that is wanted to set on foot my farming. I shall come alone; and I have engaged to me the girl that is with you." The farmer promised to do his best, and his day-labourers left him. The farmer got for the youth the farm and all things needed for farming, and, the next spring, the latter returned, alone, as he had promised. A great bridal-feast was held, and the married couple from Ábœr were bidden, not knowing anything about their foster-daughter, but what the letter had told them: and the meeting was one of great joy, when they knew their dear child again. After this the youth and his bride moved to their farm and began farming. Her husband now told her that he had not been able to bring the other man with him, as he had always been bent upon killing her; he had therefore found a place for him in the south-east part of the country. In course of time the wife was delivered of a child, a girl, and her husband took it away, and nobody knew what he did with it. They had many more children, who lived with them, and were, all of them, very hopeful.

When six years had passed, the farmer once went from home saying that he should be away for at least a week, but telling no one whither he went. At the end of a week he returned with a girl, as big as a child of nine well-grown years. This child he gave to his wife, and said that there was their first-born daughter, and added that he had taken the child away only in order to try her, but not to commit the awful crime of child-murder. The wife was more glad than can be told, to see her daughter again, and so well. After this they lived a peaceful and lucky peasant-life, and loved one another tenderly, till the day of their death at a high and good age.

OLAFR AND HELGA.

THERE was once a man, by name Sigurdr, a good farmer, and, for the most part, liked by folk, who had a daughter called Helga. He had, too, a manservant, by name Olafr, a young and hopeful fellow, and fitted in every way for his position: he was the son of a priest, and his father was already sinking in years, when the events of this tale took place. Olafr soon fell in love with the farmer's daughter, and the news of this, as wont is, early got abroad. The match was thought a great deal of, and the farmer wished nothing more than that his daughter should marry Olafr, of whom he was as fond as of his own child.

One summer, it came to pass that all the farmer's sheep were lost, and were not found again, in spite of repeated search. Next summer, the same thing happened to his ewes, and all search for them proved equally useless. This greatly vexed Olafr, who was a faithful and able servant. Many guesses were made about this, but the farmer seemed to trouble himself little concerning it; and thus some time passed without anything coming out, leading to the discovery of the sheep.

About the beginning of the winter, it once chanced that the farmer's daughter went out at evening, to look after some washing, and did not return. When people found that her stay without doors was somewhat too prolonged, they went out to look after her; but nowhere was she to be found. After this, a number of folk were gathered together to search for her, but all in vain. This greatly grieved all folk, but chiefly Olafr, who was cast thereby on to a sick bed, and enjoyed neither food nor rest. One night, when a sweet sleep had crept upon him, he had a dream, and thought that his father came to him and said: "How mettleless and void of courage you are; it is, indeed, unmanly to lie in bed, without trying to do something that might lead to a happy issue of this present trouble; or do you distrust God's taking away your distress, although this difficulty may seem to you not to be got over? Rise, provide yourself with victuals and new shoes, and then go constantly southwards, till you arrive at a mound, surrounded with ling-grown slopes. Pass the brook which flows by the mound, and then you will find a slightly-marked path, which you shall follow. Trust in God only, and let neither long walking nor bad roads prevail upon you, so that you turn back."

When Olafr awoke, he arose speedily, and dressed, and asked for provisions, and three pairs of new leather-shoes. The farmer asked whither he was going; he said he did not well know. The farmer then begged him to stay at home, saying that he should die of grief if he lost him also, as the youth had now become his only hope, and the support of his sinking age. Olafr bade him be of good cheer and not despair. Then he went away, having said farewell to the farmer, shedding tears. Now he went, according as his dream had shown him, always tending southwards. Thus he continued his walk, over heaths and moors, night and day, and anon became weary, from his long and difficult walk. At last, he came to the mound pointed out to him in the dream, passed the brook, and found the dimly-traced path. Now, he was somewhat lighter in his mind, but continued his walk for yet a long while. But, after he had thus travelled for some time, he heard a shout; and rather a manly voice it seemed to be that was crying on the mountain. This was late in the day. He went in the direction of the sound he had heard, and soon saw a tall, stout man, driving before him a great flock of lambs. He carried an axe on his shoulders, and was dressed in a white-striped brown cape, wearing a slouched hat on his head.

Olafr went up to him and gave him greeting, which the other answered rather shortly, asking what business he had there. Olafr said he was searching for some lost sheep.

"Do you think," said the man in the cape, "they are here? But no, my good fellow, you need not to tell me a lie, for I know your name, and what your errand is. You are looking for Helga, the farmer's daughter, but not for sheep. You shall therefore know, that she is not far from here. But she is well kept, and you shall see her, nevermore. I therefore advise you to retire home, and that, the sooner the better, or I shall be compelled to hurl my axe into your skull, although it is not my wont to kill people."

"It were little glory for you," answered Olafr, "to do a deed of so base treachery, as to kill me with a weapon when I have none. It is surely more just that we should wrestle, and thus try one another's strength."

Said the man in the cape: "So be it," and flung down his axe. After that, they clutched one another in grasps of wrestling, and wrestled with a manly flow of skill and strength. Backwards and forwards they went, over the ground, and Olafr found that he had to deal with more than his match in bodily strength. He therefore kept only on the defensive, until the man in the cape began to fail, and then Olafr, taking to his greater skill, felled his foe by a trick, called "the heel-hook."

Then said the man in the cape: "Little glory, indeed, is it for you to fell me, a youth of fifteen."

But Olafr answered that he would, notwithstanding, make the best use of his advantage, and was going to drag him to the spot where his axe lay. The one in the cape asked him what he was going to do. Olafr said he would be obliged to deal him his death-blow, "although I may assuredly boast, as you did before," quoth he, "of not being wont to kill people."

The man in the cape answered: "Do not kill me, for I can be of good use to you if you spare my life."

Now Olafr finding the look of the man not over-rascally, pardoned him and raised him on to his feet, having made him swear that he would act faithfully towards him. Olafr then asked him where his home was, and who he was. The man in the cape answered that his home was not far thence, and that he himself was an outlaw.

"My name," he said, "is Kári, and I have a father and mother living, both of whom are old now. I have also two brothers, who are both, far older and a great deal stronger than I am and the greatest trolls. One of them stole Helga, intending to marry her, but she will neither hear nor see him, and leads a most unhappy life. She is kept in a kind of prison, but my sisters are often with her, trying to comfort her: and everything possible is done to make her happy, but all in vain. She has waxed pale from sorrow and pining. My father is so foreseeing, that he knew all about your movements, and gave me the axe, this morning, when I went to the lambs, and bade me redden it with your blood, saying that you would come and meet me. I am, therefore, sure enough that speedy bane awaits you, if my father or my brothers get the chance of killing you. So, I rede you, rest yourself in this lamb-pen to-night, and I will send you meals enough, from home."

But Olafr said he would go with him home, and see his brothers, at any price.

"Have your will then," said Kári, "and one fate shall be for both of us."

After this, they went to a little dale, where Olafr saw a mean cottage. Thither they went, and, on arriving at the door of the cottage, Olafr saw, standing outside it, an old man, trollish and rascally-looking. This Olafr guessed to be Kari's father, and greeted him, but the old man seemed to pay no heed whatever to Olafr's courtesy, and only returned it by an infernal glance at Olafr and Kári. Now Kári took Olafr within, and had to lead him through a low and narrow entrance, where there was thick darkness, till they came into the family-room, where Olafr saw two girls, young and fair of look. He found them goodly damsels and wondered that they should be so comely, when their father was such an ugly rascal. In the far end of the room, he saw a small alcove, and an old and hideous hag sitting in it. Now Kári shewed Olafr to a seat, and sat down with him, himself, and ordered meals to be brought and set before them.

Then, the old man came in, and went up to the old hag in the alcove. Shortly after, Olafr heard a great din in the entrance passage; that was the sound of the footsteps of Kári's brothers, who entered, and who were very unlike their brother Kári, and more in the shape of trolls than of men. They went into the alcove where their father and mother were, not even looking at Olafr, but sending an awful side-glance at Kári. Olafr heard them holding talk in a low voice, in the alcove, but he spoke to no one at all, neither did anyone accost him, and even Kári kept silence at this period.

When they had sat thus for a while, the old man came forth and said: "Is not it time already, to go to bed?"

Then Kári took Olafr by the hand, and led him through the gloomy passage, into a sleeping-room, apart from the family-room, saying that he was to rest there for the night. Then he went away. In the room there was perfect darkness, and it gave birth to many an uneasy and awful thought, in Olafr's mind, and deeply he loathed the place. Soon, there came in to him a girl, who took off his clothes. They said nothing, one to the other; but, as she wiped his feet, he thought he felt a tear drop on to one of them. As the maid went out, she said in a whispering voice: "Be watchful!"

But when she was gone, Kári entered the room, and said he would stay there with Olafr, through the night.

Quoth Olafr: "That is not wise, think I; for it may have a deadly issue for both of us."

Kári saw the wisdom of this remark and prayed Olafr to be watchful and dress again; and now he placed his axe in the bed before Olafr, and said: "This will be your faithful companion, in your need, even if all other things should fail."

Kári, therefore, went away, and Olafr rose and dressed quickly. He took the coverlet of the bed, and wrapped it round his arm, and chest, and then lay down, with his hand on the handle of the axe, which, he took good care, should not be seen. When he had rested thus awhile, he heard voices and the sound of footsteps outside his door. He feigned a deep sleep, and snored loudly. Soon the door opened, and in stepped the old man with a sword in his hand, accompanied by one of his elder sons, who carried a light in one hand and in the other a knife.

They stopped in the middle of the floor a little, and the old man said: "He is asleep," and, at the same moment, he rushed at the bed in order to drag Olafr to the side of it, but Olafr made a nimble movement, and cut off the other's head with the axe. Then the son rushed at Olafr, to avenge his father's death. But

Olafr used all the swiftness of his hand, and soon despatched him, having dealt him a deadly blow. At this instant, the second elder brother entered the room, and looked by no means kindly. Olafr made ready to fight him at once with his axe, but seeing that the other was weaponless, he flung the axe away, as he would do on him no act of mean treachery. They therefore clutched one another with merciless gripe, and wrestled furiously. They flung one another, in turn, to and fro, and everything, house and all, trembled as if they would fall to the ground.

Olafr found that here he had to deal with a man far stronger than himself, and at last he fell, and the other was dragging him towards the axe, when Kári entered, and catching his brother's hand, bade them stop, saying: "I have little to be thankful to thee for, for in that thou hast tried to make me the worst of men."

Now, his brother did not dare to move, but let go his hold of Olafr, and swore he would do him no more harm.

Olafr thanked Kári heartily for his aid, and said: "Well hast thou acted, albeit my blows have fallen so near thee, in that I have killed thy father and brother."

Kári answered: "Thy life thou hadst to save; let us nevermore mention what is past."

After this, Kári led Olafr to the place where Helga was kept. Olafr could scarcely persuade himself that this was Helga, who had once looked so beautiful and blooming. She was kneeling in prayer, and tears of sorrow flowed down her pale cheeks. But now her tears of grief changed into tears of joy and gratitude for the saving of Olafr's life. She had been the very damsel who waited upon Olafr as he went to bed, but the old man had been standing in the door of the dark room, to listen if they spoke together. This he did only to satisfy his cruelty, and to inflict yet deeper wounds upon the grief-pierced heart of the virtuous and faithful maiden.

Now Olafr dwelt here for some days in great joy, and returning home, took with him, besides Helga, Kári and his two sisters. And then, the elder brother of Kári would not remain with his old mother, and so they joined the other company. They drove home all the sheep from the valley, and took everything of value with them, and set fire to the farm and burned it to ashes. Their journey was good, and they got all safe home to farmer Sigurdr's. The meeting was one of great joy, and a feast was held at Sigurdr's, to do honour to this happy event, in great glee and pleasure.

Olafr dwelt that winter with his companions, at Sigurdr's, and the next spring he married Helga, rented a farm, and became soon very important. He gave in marriage both Kári's sisters, and got a good and notable wife for Kári's self. Kári's brother also married, thanks to Olafr. Kári and Olafr continued good friends till death, and enjoyed both high age, and general respect.

EINAR OF BRUSASTADIR.

AT a farm in Skagafjördr, called Brusastadir, there lived once a servant-man by name Einar, a stout fellow and apt in many ways. Some even asserted that he was well skilled in magic. For many years, he had rowed to fish in the South country, for his master. He travelled always alone, and never yet had he met with so heavy a snow-storm, as to lose his way.

But, one winter, his way-skill forsook him in a snow-storm, and astray he went, walking thus, in full uncertainty of the direction, for many days, in the vast mountain wildernesses. At last he found a cottage in a little dale, and knocked at the door. A young and beautiful girl came to it. Einar greeted her and the girl took his greeting with sad courtesy. He asked her to go to the master and mistress of the place, and crave for him a night's rest.

Then tears overflowed her cheeks, and she said: "Ask not, O man, for that, here; try rather to get you some other shelter for the night; for, if you rest here, you will not get away with your life."

Einar said he was not afraid of anything happening to him, and bade her do as he had begged her. She went in unwillingly, and returned soon with the news that he might step in. Einar followed her in, carrying his knapsack with him. In the family-room there was a deep death-silence, and a ghastly gloom filled the room, there being no light in it. Einar uttered a greeting as he entered, and an old man and woman returned it in an ominously low and hollow voice. Now, a light was brought in, and Einar saw sitting on the dais, a man and a woman, both old, and suspicious-looking. On the floor was a large flat stone, with a great hollow in the midst of it. Einar had with him a pencil, and, having written with it a letter-mark in the hollow, stepped up to the dais, where he took his seat. No one accosted him; the girl went to her work, looking very sad.

Einar asked if the good-wife were not going to give him somewhat to eat.

She answered with an unintelligible muttering, and, going from the room, soon brought in meat for him. He took his supper with great appetite, and betrayed no fear whatever. But he often noticed that the married couple gave him awful side-looks.

Shortly after Einar had finished his meals, the carl said, It would be as well to finish the task, and went out of the room, the old hag following him. At this, the girl began to weep. Soon after, they returned, the old man whetting a huge knife, and the old woman carrying a basin in her hand, which she took to the stone, in order to fix it in it. When she had tried without avail to do so, the carl went to assist her, but nay! fixed in the hollow it could not be. Now Einar offered to fix the basin in the hollow for them. He acordingly went to the stone, and wrote a letter-mark inside the basin, and, all at once, the basin was fixed into the stone, and the old man and his wife became fixed to the basin, and could by no struggling get themselves loose. Hereupon, Einar walked quietly to his seat, and begged the girl to go and boil him a goodly portion of smoked mutton, which would, undoubtedly, be got there, and told her she need have no fear of her master and mistress, as they had enough to do in taking care of themselves. She did as he bade her, and brought, after a while, in to him, a trencher full of good smoked mutton. Now he began eating, and bade the girl do the same. They had a good repast, and when the meal was over, Einar went to sleep in the married couple's bed, and slept soundly till next morning, when the weather was clear and the day bright.

He addressed himself then to his journey, and asked the girl whence she was. She told him all about herself, and said that these wretches had stolen her from her home, and kept her for seven years, and, in that time, they had killed nine travellers and rifled them of all their goods. After this, Einar got an axe, and, going up to the old couple, cut off their heads, and afterwards burnt their bodies. He took all the money he found, and the girl, and brought all away with him, to the North, thus returning from his southward journey, and leaving all fishing for that season. He came to Brusastadir and abode there the rest of the winter.

Next spring he married the maiden, leased a farm, and began farming. He fetched, afterwards, from the dale all that was of any use, and lived with his wife, to a high old age, always happy and prosperous.

SIGRIDR OF SKALHOLT.

ONCE there was a bishop at Skálholt, who had a daughter, by name Sigridr. Her father loved her very dearly, and no wonder, as she was most beauteous of look, virtuous, innocent, and highly accomplished in all those things which make a perfect lady. Many asked her hand in marriage, but she would listen to nothing of the kind. Once it happened, in the spring, that she was walking abroad, at a goodly distance from her father's house. All of a sudden, twelve men rode up to her, one of whom catching hold of her, set her on horseback behind him, and off they all rode like madmen, till they came to a small hut, where they alighted, and took Sigridr within.

The man who had carried her away, said to her: "Here is your place. You are now far in the mountains, and if you try to run off, you will be killed. You must also be our cook, and attend upon us, and if you do not well fulfil your duties, you may look for hard treatment."

She now silently did as she was told to do, and everything went on smoothly for her. Now the autumn advanced, and the hut-dwellers began to talk about gathering sheep, for their winter support. At this time, it happened, that Sigridr was once in the entrance of the cottage, with a light in her hand; and the bishop, her father, having made many a search for her in vain, was this same night, far from his home, and saw a flickering light in the distance, which was the one which his daughter held in her hand. He therefore sped on towards the light, and at last found his daughter at the door. The damsel welcomed her father heartily and told him to go away, the sooner the better, for one of the men was such a sorcerer that he knew the bishop to be there. She added that, on the morrow, the whole band would go away, and then she would be only too glad to speak with him, if he could come to see her then.

Now the bishop went away, and his daughter went to bed. Next day, the hut-men all went off, and soon after, came the bishop, to speak with his daughter.

"Now there are but few redes to take, that will avail," said she; "however, at the third evening from this, you must come here, and bring some men with you. Then these people will have wandered far and wide over the mountains, and will be unwary. When they take off their clothes, I will take good care that they be not too quick in dressing again."

She then shewed her father one of the beds, telling him that the man sleeping in this bed, he must kill first, for else, it would fare ill with them both, that man being the greatest of sorcerers, knowing many things, and even that she and her father were now speaking. Then the bishop went away. In the evening, the hut-dwellers came home, bringing numbers of sheep with them. The wizard now gave Sigridr a good scolding and a sound drubbing, saying he well knew, that she wanted to betray them, as she had spoken with her father that day; and added that she should be killed, if she made, any more, any attempt of the kind.

Next day the hut-dwellers fetched another lot of sheep, with which they returned in the evening. And, the third day, they went on a new search for sheep, and returned in the evening, having gathered altogether twelve hundred sheep, one hundred being intended for each man's winter food.

That night, they were very tired, and on going to bed, undressed wholly. Sigridr took their clothes from them, and turned inside out one sleeve of each serk, and one leg of each pair of drawers, and in this state brought the clothes in again. Now, this same evening, the bishop arrived with all his men, and attacked the hut-men in their beds; and so mightily slow were they in getting into their clothes, that all were killed, except the wizard, who managed to get away.

When Sigridr became aware that this man had got safe and sound away, she fainted again and again. But when she came to herself at last her father comforted her, saying that, while he was alive, she need have no fear. After this, the bishop went, with all his men and his daughter, home to Skálholt. He took all that he found of value in the hut, and divided it amongst the poor, but the sheep he gave back to their owners again.

Now Sigridr lived with her father at Skálholt, but she was often in low spirits and sad, and this was put down to her being afraid of the magician. She asked her father never to take a winter-guest without her knowledge.

Now many years passed, and many a hopeful young man came to woo her, but she would not marry.

One autumn, a man well dressed, arriving from abroad, came to Skálholt. He had many costly things and treasures with him, and asked the bishop to allow him to stay there for the winter. This the bishop did, giving him a storehouse for his things.

When no little part of the winter had gone by, the man fell ill, and so sorely gained the illness upon him, that the bishop felt it his duty to pay him a sick-visit, and asked him what ailed him and how he could help him.

Quoth the man, the bishop would be the likeliest of all folk to help him.

Then the bishop asked in what way he could serve him.

The man answered: "I would marry your daughter; and, if I be allowed to entertain a hope of this, I shall soon get better."

The bishop promised to do his best in the matter, and the man gradually recovered.

Now the bishop spake of the thing to his daughter, but she gave it a decided refusal.

"This is unwise of you," said her father, "for you must well know that I shall not always live with you, and that when I die you will be left alone and without support."

She said she would marry nobody, and least of all this person. But the bishop waxing wrath at the harsh refusal of his daughter, said: "I purpose not to let you have your will in this matter, and I do hereby bid and command you to marry this man."

And after this, the bishop went to the man and told him that their wedding should be celebrated soon, for he had now taken the matter in hand, to carry it through. Then the man said that he would act somewhat differently in this thing, from the usual custom, and that he would build a house, where he would sleep, the first night, with his bride.

Now he built a fine, large house, and when it was finished, the bishop made a grand wedding-feast, but the bride was very sad, and wept often. But to this, nobody gave heed, and thus the feast passed. In the evening, the bishop followed the newly-married couple to their house, where there was a fine bed prepared for them; and having seen the place, he turned homewards, locking the house door. After that, the man bade his wife go to bed, and when they had gone to bed, the bridegroom spoke to her in the following words: "I am the man whom you intended formerly to have killed in the mountain-hut. You slew all my companions, and did not intend to let me escape with my life. Therefore, in truth, you have merited well, that I torment you to death; and that I am ready to do."

Then Sigridr embraced him, and prayed him to spare her life.

But coldly he answered: "Nay, not I. I shall stab you with eleven glowing-hot spikes of iron, and the twelfth I shall pierce through your heart, for your having intended to kill me."

"As I shall not be allowed to live, then allow me at least to say my prayers before I die!" begged the bride, in despair. Now, as she prayed, the wall of the house opened, at the side of the bed, and she, leaping up, rushed out into the dark night. She heard her husband running after her, with great shouts, and at last, she took refuge under a hollow bank. The man looked for her, but did not find her.

Next morning, when the bishop came into the house, the man said that Sigridr had vanished in the night, and that he thought it likeliest, outlaws might have stolen her. The bishop believed this, and it made him grieve sorely, and he bewailed much the loss of his dear daughter. He gathered men together, and searched for her, with them, himself. In no long while, he found her, and then she told him the whole story.

When she had returned home, the bishop ordered the man to be siezed, and tortured in the same way as he would have tortured his bride.

Some time late, Sigridr married a worthy and brave man, and was always looked upon as a notably good wife.

KETILRIDUR.

IN the days of yore, there lived, in a valley of the East-country, a man named Grímr. His wife was hight Thorkatla, and his daughter, Ketilrídur, and they had no other children than this daughter.

One autumn, it happened that, when the walks were searched, numbers of sheep were missing. Ketilrídur's father was one who suffered most from this, as he lost nearly all his sheep. He, as well as others, was greatly annoyed hereat, but there was nothing to be done. Early in the winter, Ketilrídur came to her father, and spoke thus to him: "I would, father, that you allow me to go and search the wildernesses for your sheep. I have a foreboding that, if you should give me your leave to go, my search will not be in vain."

Grímr answered: "I knew well, before now, daughter, that you had a man's heart in a woman's breast, but I cannot say I find this journey to be very promising. It is more than likely that trolls, mountain-spirits, and robbers haunt the wildernesses and lie in wait for you, and will make you their prisoner, and either take away your life, or, at the least, keep you in endless thraldom."

Ketilrídur answered: "This, I believe, is more talk than truth, and in no way am I ready to put faith in it."

She begged her father thus, till at last he gave his consent to her going, and bade his herdsman accompany her. To this she uttered no unwillingness; and now she prepared for a long walk, taking provisions and new shoes, and, having bidden farewell to her parents, went off with the herdsman. But as soon as they were out of sight, she made the man go back again. This made Grímr, her father, very anxious about his daughter's safety, and he thought that surely Death had called her into this hazardous and strange undertaking.

Now Ketilrídur walked for a long time, through the wildernesses, and, at last, the clouds began to gather up, and the weather became gloomy, and a snow-storm drew nearer and nearer. In the storm, she quite lost her way, but still went on for a long while, not knowing where she was, or whither she sped. At last, she came to the brow of a mountain, and stepping over it, went down the slopes, and a fearfully hard passage she found it, what with the precipices and the frozen snow. However, she got down to the level ground, and then the storm was so thick, that she could not see things before her, even at a span's distance. She deemed, nathless, that she was in a valley, and after a short while, she came to a river, covered with ice-edges along the banks, but open in the middle. She followed the course of this river, till she came to a pen, of huge size, and saw a man, with many sheep, at the door of it. Not finding the man evil-looking, she greeted him, and he answered curtly. Then Ketilrídur recognized here, her father's sheep and those of other folk in their neighbourhood.

She asked the man his name, and he said it was Thorsteinn, adding moreover, that there was but one cottage in the valley. He was letting the sheep into the pen, and Ketilrídur helped him to do so, and said she would ask for shelter at the farm, for the night.

The man said, it was very unwise of her, if she loved her life. "For here," he said, "no one's life is ever spared of those who ask for shelter. But I will, notwithstanding, undertake to guard against anything happening to you, if you will follow me. I know what your errand is, and I should wish it to succeed."

Now they went to the house, and through the door, and there, in a corner, the man, removing several things, lifted at last a trap-lid, under which a little underground cave opened. Down into this, he bade Ketilrídur go, and not move, whatever she might hear, and however great noise was going on; for, if she moved, or uttered a sound, it would cost her life. After this, he covered up the cave, and went away.

In a short while, the girl heard the sound of footsteps, and the voices of no less than six people, all asking about, and searching for the guest. She also heard Thorsteinn deny that anyone had gone there.

And now the noise waxed so loud, that every rafter cracked, and the earth trembled, and she was seized with an awful fear. After some while, all became still, and Ketilrídur soon dropped into a deep sleep, being both drowsy and weary.

Early the next morning, Thorsteinn woke her, and bade her follow him. She was not long in getting up. He went with her to the pen, and gave her her father's sheep and those belonging to her neighbours; and afterwards accompanied her out of the valley, in fine and clear weather.

When they parted, Thorsteinn said to Ketilrídur :

"Now, I will lend you my dog, to follow you home. He will do the task of any active man, in driving sheep. He will leave you, at the enclosure wall of your farm. But I wish you would gather people round you, who should be in readiness whenever you wanted them. Do not come hither with them yet, till I have sent you Sörli, my dog, for then I shall be sorely in need of help. I will also beg you not to marry, till you know what becomes of me."

Thereupon, they parted, and Sörli drove all the sheep home to Grímr's farm.

Now Ketilrídur went home, and her parents were wondrous glad to have their child back again, as they thought, from the very jaws of death. All folk got too, their missing sheep, and there was no end to their praise of Ketilrídur's courage and activity. She then gathered together, to her, the stoutest and strongest men in the parish, twenty-four in all, and appointed a man named Ketill, to be their leader, and bade them to be in readiness whenever she might call them.

Once, in the winter, she dreamt that Thorsteinn came to her, saying that he was in sore need of her help. She got up early, and as she opened the door of the farm, at it stood Sörli, wagging his tail and caressing Ketilrídur, as she stepped out. She went swiftly for her men, who all busked in a hurry, and started off with Sörli as their guide. They came into the valley, late in the day, and walked up to the farm, but there was no one to be seen outside.

Ketilrídur said to the men: "Wait at the back of the houses, and do not betray yourselves, but if I call, come then forth without delay."

They promised to do so, and now she went in, and into the family-room, and took silently a seat on the dais. She saw in the room an old man and an old woman, and six young men, and all these people looked awfully fierce. The old woman spoke to Ketilrídur and asked if she would have something to eat. Ketilrídur said she would, and out went the old woman, and brought in a large dish full of meat. But as the damsel looked at the meat, she did not like it, for it was human flesh. She said she was unaccustomed to such food, and asked for other, and the old woman then brought in mutton. But as soon as it had been set before the guest, the old man took a great knife and began to whet it, saying to his sons that it would be as well to kill Ketilrídur, the sooner the better, and bidding them seize her. They stood up at once, but she asked to be allowed to sing first her death-prayer, for she was a Christian. The old carl was not a devout person, and said that, of such twaddle, he would have none; but his sons were curious to hear the prayer, having never heard such a thing before, and therefore she was allowed to sing her prayer. She then asked them to take her to the threshold of the entrance-door, for God would never enter their cottage, to take her soul. This the old carl would not allow, but his sons would have their own will, and took her to the threshold, the old man following behind, with his knife in his hand. And now Ketilrídur began praying thus:—

"Keta! Keta! Keta mine!
Come thou hither, with followers thine,
And fetch thou hence this soul of mine!"

Then Ketill and his men jumped up, and rushed, with all their weapons, to the door, and thereat the lads let go their hold of Ketilrídur, but could not escape, for Ketill and his men killed all the rascal-band, and burned them afterwards. Now began the search for Thorsteinn, whom they found, under Sörli's guidance, in a room locked off, with his hands tied to the back of the seat he was sitting on, and his legs in ice-cold water up to the knees. Before him was a dish with smoked mutton on it, but he could not reach it. Then he was untied from his chair and given refreshment. He told them whence he was, and that these wretches had stolen him, as he was a good herdsman. Now all that was of any value was taken away from the cottage, and itself burnt. There was an endless quantity of treasures, all of which became the property of Thorsteinn and Ketilrídur. They brought all their riches to the damsel's home, and rewarded the men well for their trouble.

Now Thorsteinn wooed Ketilrídur, and got her father's consent, and they married, and lived at Grímr's farm after his death. They loved each other tenderly till the end, and became the richest of farming folk in their days.

ASMUNDR OF FJALL.

THERE was once a man named Asmundr, son of the farmer of Fjall, in Kolbeinsdalur, in Skagafjördr. He was strong, and fair of look, and well liked by everyone who saw him. He was wont to go often to Hólar, and look into the books the pupils studied, and thus he acquired knowledge of many things which are useful to anyone, to know, and although he was not a regular scholar of the school, he knew a great deal of the pupils' tasks.

Once it happened that the bishop of Hólar wanted to send a great deal of money to his Reverence of Skálholt. For this mission he chose one of the pupils, called Sigurdr. This was in winter, and it was thought unsafe to let one man go alone over the mountains, and therefore the bishop told Sigurdr to take whomsoever he liked, to be his companion on the journey. Thereupon, Sigurdr chose Asmundr, who, when he was asked, said he would go if his father gave leave. But when his father was spoken to, about this, he was very loth to give leave, yet, as Asmundr liked to go, he, at last yielded and gave his leave. Now they busked, and started off, and had a good journey southwards, and when they had finished their errand at Skálholt, returned northwards. When they were on the mountain, the weather became gloomy, and so heavy a snowstorm overtook them, that they lost the way. Then Asmundr asked what counsel they should now take. Sigurdr answered: "You are the man to give us good redes."

"Well then," said Asmundr, "my rede is, that we part company. This storm is none of nature's doings, but is caused by human beings. You will soon get into the right path, when we have parted; for, another way is intended for me, if I am not mistaken."

To this Sigurdr yielded most unwillingly, but must needs let Asmundr have his will. Asmundr begged him to bear his greeting home and, after this, they parted. No long time had Sigurdr walked, when the weather became clearer, and he, finding the right way, got, all safe and well, to the North. When he told these tidings in the North, Asmundr's father fell ill, and was thrown upon a sick bed, and thought surely his son was lost for ever.

Asmundr walked on his way, without knowing whither he was going, in the thick snow-drift. At last, he came into a valley, along which he walked for a while, until he came, in the evening, to a farm with lofty buildings. He saw, at the door, two children whom he greeted, and who greeted him in return. He asked them to go in, and crave of the house-owner, a night's shelter for him. They ran into the house, and after a little while, there came out an old man, not of evil look, and went silently straight up to Asmundr, and caught him for a wrestle. Asmundr was tired, but must needs receive his assailant, spite of the difficulty of wrestling in wet clothes. They fought sturdily for a long while, and Asmundr had enough to do in defending himself, but, at last the bout ended with the old man's falling to the ground. Asmundr spared his life, and allowed him to get up.

But, no sooner had he risen to his feet, that he went up again to Asmundr, without a word, and caught him for another wrestle, and was now even stronger than before. But, at last, the old man was felled this time, too. Asmundr again spared his life, and allowed him to stand up.

No sooner was he on his legs the second time, than he went straight up to Asmundr, and caught him; quite silently, for another wrestle, and was now by far strongest and most violent in his attack, and Asmundr felt that this game was a desperate one for him.

At this moment, a girl came to the doorway, with a light in her hand. Asmundr looked at her, and she struck him so much with her beauty, that he thought more of her than of his wrestling, and of this the old man took the best advantage and felled him, saying: "Now I will treat you as you have treated me, and give you your life, if you wish it."

Asmundr said he would accept this offer, "but, my fall," said he, "was caused by the young maiden who brought the light into the doorway."

Then Asmundr got up, and the old man took him to the family-room, and was as gay and gleesome as if nothing had happened. All that Asmundr saw here, bore clear marks of cleanliness and taste. He saw a fine-looking old woman on the dais, and the children who had been at the door, by her side. He greeted the dame, and she answered his greeting kindly. He was shewn to a seat, and the fair-looking maiden took his wet clothes, to dry them, and then brought him in some meals. He eat with good appetite, and then got a good bed to rest himself in, and the maiden waited upon him. Now Asmundr dropped into a sweet sleep, and slept soundly till next morning, when the old man, who was early up, came to him with a kind "Good-morning."

He dressed, and they walked out together, round the farm, the weather now being fine and bright.

Then the old man said to Asmundur: "You must know that I am your uncle, but my wife is a bishop's daughter. When she was at her home, she became with child, I being the father, and I saw that all hope for her future was lost, if she remained at home, and therefore we made good our escape into this valley. Shortly after, she was delivered of a daughter, the same that brought the light to the door, yesterday. The other children are also ours. We managed to take with us to this valley some cooking-things, and I had some sheep, which I contrived to get hither, some time afterwards. We have never robbed, or in any way annoyed travellers, and none have found us, before you. Now I know all about the way in which things go on, in the peopled districts; I had one true friend, who has faithfully kept up communication with me, and who has told me these things; besides, I had some little skill in hidden knowledge, and it was I who caused the snow-storm, for I would see you. But the awkward way in which I received you, yesterday evening, was owing to my wish to know and try your strength, and I can only say, that you enjoy a great deal thereof, for I know that you were tired with travelling. Now I should like you to stay here this winter, to entertain and amuse us."

Asmundr dwelt there that winter, amusing himself in the company of the farmer's beautiful daughter, and meeting with no ban from either side therefor.

The next spring, when Asmundr prepared himself for leaving, the old man said to him: "Now it is only a little time that we are allowed to live longer, I and my wife, and I beg you to take care that we be buried as other Christians. After that, it is my wish that you should marry my daughter, the which is, I trust, against the will and desire of neither of you. Furthermore, I pray you to take my children and let them be well fostered and well taught. But I hope my daughter will be found well up in the things pertaining to spiritual training, as also are the others for their age. I will, myself, make our own coffins."

This said, Asmundr parted in sorrow from these folk, and then sped homewards, as the old man had directed him. He came to Fjall and found first his mother, who received him with all the transport a mother feels, when she, unexpecting, finds her own child returned, as it were from the dead. She told him, his father still kept his sick bed from sorrow and anguish, and that she would go to him, to try to revive and cheer him with the hope that his son might return.

"For," she said, "if you come upon him unexpectedly, the sudden change from sorrow to joy would perchance have an evil result for him, weak as he is."

She therefore went to her husband, and asked after his health. He said it was much the same as before.

"Now," said his wife, "I can bring you good tidings; namely that I have a firm hope of your son's being alive, and I would you should look a little cheery, if so be he might come to us soon."

Hereat, the old man revived a great deal, and sat up in his bed, and when he had as much recovered as his wife wished, she went for Asmundr and brought him to his father. He greeted his father, and their meeting was one of joy, not to be told. After this, he told his father all about his adventures, and the old man wondered not a little, to hear of his brother, whom he deemed dead long since. From that time forth, his illness passed, and he regained his former health and strength. Not long after, Asmundr went to Hólar, where he was heartily welcomed by Sigurdr, and all the other folk of the place. Now he dwelt at home for a while.

One night he dreamt that his uncle came to him and said: "Now is the time for you to come to me; bring good and active people with you, and horses enough for the journey."

When Asmundr awoke, he told the dream to his father, and gathering quickly together horses and men, rode away to the valley. Arrived there, he found that the old couple had lately died, and the children had put them into the coffins. Asmundr took the coffins with the bodies in them, all the children, and everything he could remove of value from the farm, and brought all home to Fjall, a mighty long way, and buried the dead at Hólar. After this, Asmundr married the beautiful maiden, and they loved each other very dearly; for the children he provided a good education, and they became, anon, good, useful and respectable people. After his father's death, Asmundr lived at his farm, in good luck and prosperity, up to a high age; and now we know nought more to tell concerning him.

GUDRUN THE REVENGEFUL.

LONG ago, says the story, there lived at a farm called Hladhamar, in Hrútafjördr, a farmer, by name Arni. He was a man of great influence in his parish, hot-tempered and unforgiving, and knew but little of governing his temper, if he was offended in any way. As for his children, he had only one daughter, hight

Gudrún. She was, in her early age, a great shrew, and of a stubborn temper, like her father. It fell not to everyone's lot to win her favour, but, that once won, she was the most faithful of friends. At a farm near to Hladhamar, lived a widow, who had a son by name Jón. He was a hopeful lad, meek and modest to everyone, and of the most tranquil temper.

He and Gudrún often played together in their childhood, and were very fond one of the other. When Jón was sixteen years old, and Gudrún twelve, he went into service at Hladhamar, and there he soon became a favourite with everybody. After he had been two years at Hladhamar, he wooed Gudrún the farmer's daughter. But when he mentioned this to Arni, the latter gave him a decided and peevish refusal, and begged Jón to mention the matter nevermore. Folk knew that this grieved deeply Jón and Gudrún, for there was between them the same loving union as before, albeit they made but little show of it. After this Jón dwelt at Hladhamar till he was twenty years of age.

About this time, one autumn, it happened that the farmer of Hladhamar missed great numbers of sheep from the mountains, and the same was the case with many other farmers besides him. Jón went into the mountain-wildernesses, in search of the sheep, and, having been away for a week, returned with a great many of them. The next autumn, it was the same story again, and Jón went out for a fortnight, returning late one day with the greater part of the missing sheep. He went to his bed when he came home, and took his meals, and when he had finished, said to Gudrún, who had, like many others, missed one of her sheep, a spotted wether: "Are you no coming to the fold, to see your spotted wether?"

She said: "Yes."

Out therefore she went with him, taking a large bundle of clothes under her arm, but no one seemed to heed it. In a little while, also, Jón went out, and after this, none knew what had become of him and Gudrún. Farmer Arni made enquiry for them at the neighbouring farms, and through all the neighbouring parishes, but in vain, for no one had seen or heard anything of them. Nothing had been lost at Hladhamar, save the sheep belonging to Jón, the spotted wether belonging to Gudrún, and the clothes of both the young people. At the same time, Jón's mother had lost a cow or a heifer, concerning which she made neither fuss nor search.

Now Arni thought it sure that Jón had run away with his daughter, and he made searches in all imaginable directions, and nooks, and corners of the country, but all were fruitless, and now the winter approached, and nothing could be done. Then Arni set the price of a farm, worth one hundred, on Jón's head, and promised beside, to anyone who should bring him Jón, dead or alive, Gudrún to wife.

Next summer, Arni gathered people together to explore all the wildernesses, wherein there might be any chance of finding Jón and Gudrún; but, even now, all this was in vain. However, as it often happens, the searchers were not all of one mind; all the better people would neither find Jón, nor, by any means, betray his place of hiding, even if they found it; while the meaner and greedier among them, would gladly, by all means, get hold of the reward-money. And thus passed that summer, and the next winter, and nothing came to light about Jón.

Next summer, Arni went out, with a fresh band of searchers, intending to go farther than they had gone, at any time before. And as they had reached the farthest bounds of their search, some thought they smelt smoke, but the others said this was not so, and thus prevented the rest from going any farther, for that time. But when they had returned home, Arni heard some loose talk about this, and although the most and the best of the searchers denied it, he would not believe what they said, and busked from home, himself, with those of his band who thought they had smelt the smoke. And when they got to the place, they saw a pillar of smoke, rising up from a little mound, by which a pile of faggots was placed. They climbed the mound, and saw a window open upon it, and through it they discovered Jón lying on his back on a bed, with a cradle and a young child in it, at his side. He was reading a book and rocking the cradle. Arni went down from the mound and found the entrance to it, and having entered the underground house, saw his daughter Gudrún in a little cave, like a hut, sitting before a hearth, and cooking something in a pot, which she had put on the fire. Now Arni went farther in, paying no heed to his daughter, till he found the room where Jón was lying in bed, taking a fatherly care of his cradle-child.

He rushed at Jón, dealt him eighteen stabs with a knife and then left him, half dead, on the bed, with the knife sticking in his last wound.

No beasts did they see here, but one cow, which had just calved.

Nothing farther is told of their doings here, and, this deed done, Arni returned home with his men. After a week, they came again to the mound, and found Gudrún sitting on the bed before Jón, with a child in her arms, giving suck to it at her breast. The pot stood yet on the hearth, but the fire had gone out, long ago. The cow had not been milked, and the milk had flowed from her udders, of its own accord, and the animal was on the very eve of dying from hunger. Then Arni took his daughter, and her child, a girl, and brought both home, to Hladhamar.

Formerly Gudrún had slept on a short couch in the family-room, but now another woman had taken that bed. Gudrún, however, went, in gloomy silence, to her former sleeping-place, and driving away the other woman, went to bed, never rising from it while her father was there, at the farm, and never speaking one word to anybody.

Now Jón's mother, hearing these tidings, sent men to fetch the body of her son, as also all things that were of any value, from the mound. No precious things were found there, save what the mother had given her son, for he and Gudrún had lived by hunting and fishing. But Jón had hollowed out the mound, in those bygone autumns, when he had gone to search for the sheep.

Now Jón's body, having been well examined, was buried according to the ordinary custom, and after this, the mother raised a lawsuit against Arni, for having murdered her son. When he had been found guilty of this foul crime, a sentence of death was passed upon him, and he was doomed to be beheaded. But his daughter Gudrún, finding this sentence too mild, rose for the first time, from her bed, and began a new lawsuit.

She claimed that her father should be additionally sentenced to a fine, for having used her ill, and even attempted, as it were, murder upon herself; as also, for having used her and her daughter, a child of but one year old, shamefully; leaving her alone with the child on her breast, without aid in those far-off wildernesses, alone with the corpse of her husband, so shockingly mutilated and slain by her father's own hand. She went before the Court, described, as it had happened, the horrible murder, and spake with such eloquent words, that all things wore a worse hue, and, more than ever, turned to her father's condemnation. Thereafter, she gave up the bloody knife to the judges, which her father had left in her husband's last wound, and claimed sternly that her father should suffer the same death as he had dealt Jón, and that his body should be burned to ashes, adding :—

"For sore burned my heart, when I sat over Jón the departed."

And so great was the power of her words, and so convincing her speech, that the judges passed the sentence, even as she wished it. Then was it fulfilled;

but Gudrún began farming at Hladhamar, and lived long there, without ever more marrying.

Her daughter, hight likewise Gudrún, married thereafter, and lived at Hladhamar, after her mother.

Hither, and farther not, does this story go.

How the Bishop of Skalholt Sent a Messenger.

Once upon a time, a farmer in the East-country had twelve children, the eldest of whom was a lad of twelve. This boy used to go to the neighbouring farms, in order to get somewhat to eat, for his father was very poor.

It happened that, when he was returning from one of these journeys, he was overtaken by a dark fog, and lost his way. He then resolved to go no farther, and laid himself down on a grass-slope. When he had rested for a while on the slope, a lad came to him and asked him wherefore he was there.

He answered that he had stopped in the fog, lest he should go farther astray.

The stranger then asked if he were fain to come with him, to Skálholt, and, after some talk, they made up their minds to go thither together. They came then to Skálholt, and asked for a night's shelter, and were shewn into a room, where they slept together that night. Next morning, when talking together in bed, the son of the poor farmer said he would like to rest here for the day, and work for his meals. But the other said he cared nothing for that, and would get them better, at the next farm. The bishop overheard their talk, and when the lads had got up, gave orders to let them appear before him, in his own room: when they came there, he asked the poor farmer's son if he would stay in the place, for the day.

He answered: "Yes."

But to the other boy, the bishop said: "You will do well to go, for you will fare better at the other farm."

The poor farmer's son then remained behind, whereas the other went away. After three days the farmer's son left also, and the bishop ordered three horses to be loaded with victuals, which were for the lad's parents; and, said he, the boy might return, whenever he liked. Soon after, the boy returned, and became the bishop's shepherd.

Now time passed until he was fifteen years of age. The bishop was wont to despatch a messenger, every year, to Hólar, but, few of those he sent, ever returned. The farmer's son heard talk about this northward journey, and asked the bishop to give him leave to go upon it; but the bishop, being very fond of the boy, would not consent thereto. But this so much disappointed the eager youth, that he fell ill, and kept his bed for a week. The bishop went to the lad's bed, one day, and said he would give him leave to go, as he wished it so earnestly and would expose himself to the risks of so hazardous a journey. Now the farmer's son began dressing himself, and the bishop bade him fetch a he-goat. This he ordered his men to kill, and told the farmer's son to feed upon its flesh, for a week.

One morning, at the end of this week, the bishop called the boy into his room, and gave him a refreshing draught of some liquor, and bade him wrestle with the old man who stood in the path before the house, saying that if he did not fell him, he could not expect to be allowed to undertake the northward journey. The two began wrestling, therefore, and the old man hurled the lad far into the air, at the first touch. When the bishop asked him how he had succeeded, the boy was so downcast that he could give no answer. Next morning the same thing was repeated, and this time the lad contrived to fell the old man on to one knee; of this he was very proud and glad, and told the bishop; but the latter said he must needs be able to fell the other with perfect ease.

The third morning, the boy dealt with the old man as easily as the latter had dealt with him the first morning. And now he came to the bishop in great glee, and told him the result of his wrestling.

The bishop asked him what he thought of the old man's look and mien.

The poor man's son answered: "I dislike him much; he is ugly and loathsome."

"But if it should chance that he were myself?" asked the other.

At this the farmer's son blushed deeply for shame, for he saw that he had, in truth, been fighting with his Reverence himself.

Next morning, the bishop told him that he should go northwards. He accordingly started, and the bishop, accompanying him a part of the way, took forth a bottle from his clothes and said: "Drink of this when your life is in danger."

And he gave him, too, a black dog, which he was to use, he said, as a guide, and bade him rest at night, without fail, wherever the dog lay down.

Now they parted from one another, and the boy followed the dog till it lay down, and there he took up his quarters for the night.

Next day, the boy and the dog continued travelling, till they came to a hill, and now a snow-storm had arisen, and the dog would go on the south side of the hill, but the lad on the north. He then patted the dog and went on the north side of the hill, parting thus with the dog, and continued walking, till he stumbled, in the gloomy snow-drift, against the door of a mean hut. He knocked at the door, but nobody came out; again he knocked, but to no purpose. After this he mounted on to the hut and made as if he would madly knock it down. Then an old man came to the door, and opened it ajar, asking what was the matter, and what all this meant. The farmer's son told him who he was, and asked for shelter, for the night. This the old man refused him, and was going to thrust the door to again, but the farmer's son pushed it against him and thus got in, and pursued the old man into the family-room. In one end of the room he saw an old woman sitting on a bed, carding wool, with an axe lying under her thigh; but in the other end he saw two lads and a girl. When the girl saw him she burst into tears. This however did not trouble the young man, who, on the contrary, walked carelessly up and down the floor, and, after a while said to the old carl sitting in the doorway: "We Skálholt-men are unwont to get nothing to eat, where we come."

The old man, on hearing this, went out, and fetched a bowl full of curds, and gave it to the farmer's son, who having taken a spoonful of them, returned them again to the owner.

Now a long time passed, which the farmer's son spent in walking about as before, till, at last he said: "We Skálholt-men are unwont to have no work to do."

Hearing this, the old carl went out of the room. Meanwhile, the young man undid his knapsack, and taking forth the flask, took a good draught from it; and, just as he had finished drinking, the old man entered with a hide, and bade him knead it soft. The youth began kneading it, but no sooner had he tried to stretch it out, than it snapped into two pieces, in the middle, and he, throwing it at the old man, said: "We Skálholt-men are unwont to knead the skins of such starved meat."

The old man went off to fetch another, and in the meanwhile, the farmer's son took another draught from his bottle. On his return, the old man gave him another hide, and the farmer's son treated it in the same way as the other. Another draught from the bottle followed, and another hide was given him, which shared the fate of the others.

Now the old woman went out with some porringers, and the young girl followed her. Shortly after, the old man entered, with a bowl full of soup, and meat cut into small pieces; the young man eat one piece of meat and took one spoonful of soup, and then gave the rest to the old man. Now all the people went to bed. The farmer's son observed where the young girl lay, and when he thought the others fast and sound on their pillows, he went over to her bed, asking her about these people, and he learned that she was the daughter of the old carl.

He had, she said, stolen away from the peopled land, with her, and met with the old woman, her stepmother, who had prevailed upon him to kill all people that came to their cottage: by this old dame he had had the lads, whom the youth had seen, her half-brothers. At last, she said: "If it should so happen that you had their lives in your power, I beg you not to kill the lads."

Then they heard that the old woman awoke and said to her carl: "Is it not time to get up?"

He answered: "Nay, it is too early."

"This is now," said the old woman, "the twentieth of the Skálholt-men, and he looks to me the hardiest of them all."

Now the old couple fell asleep again, but the farmer's son and the girl got up, and went into the kitchen and kindled a light. Then they stole quietly to the family-room, the farmer's son with an axe in his hand, which the girl had given him. When they came in, the first thing he did was to cut off the old man's head, but the old woman leapt out of bed and made for the door. At this, the lads awoke and fell upon the poor man's son, and their half-sister feigned to help them, but in truth took the other's part. He got the best of the conflict, and the lads prayed him to spare their lives, which he granted them.

Now, as the folk went through the passage, to the outer door, they found the old woman's entrails torn out by the dog, which had some time ago parted with its master, but was in the right place, at the right time. After this, the old man and woman were burned on a pile. Now the lads shewed to the poor man's son the farm-beasts,—six hundred sheep, and three horses, of which one was of a black colour and belonged to the old man's daughter. A larger horse the youth had never seen before. He then asked the lads to shew him the right way, and took this great horse, and rode it.

He had a good journey to the North, and on his return came to this same cottage, and stopped there a week.

After that, he made for the South, taking the damsel with him, and begging the boys to take care of the cottage and creatures meanwhile. When they came to Skálholt, they were warmly received by the bishop. The poor man's son having told the bishop his adventures, prayed him to teach the girl the Christian faith, for she was a heathen. This the bishop promised to do, and did; and the next spring, the youth and maiden were married.

The young man, knowing that his Reverence would fain have the black horse, gave it him, which gift the bishop acknowledged by another,—that of three farms in the north of the country. After this the poor man's son moved to the North with his wife and two of his sisters, taking the outlaw-lads and all the goods with him, on his way to the North. He made the lads Christian teachers, and married his two sisters to them, giving them his two other farms.

Now these three married couples lived at their farms, to a high age, in great love and prosperity, and we know no more of their story.

THE DAY-LABOURER.

In a district called Biskuptúngur, there once lived a farmer, who was well off, and had, of children by his wife, only one son. This son was the darling of his parents, being their only child, and a hopeful lad withal. He lived with his parents up to the age of sixteen.

Once, in the summer, it happened that two of the neighbouring farmers, whose wont it was to go, every summer, to the North-country for day-labour, came to the man, and asked him to let his son go with them to the North, to give him a chance of shewing himself a man, and winning fame and renown. In the beginning, the farmer was unwilling to let his son go, but gave his leave at last, for the boy wanted much to go. After the time had passed, when lambs are taken from the ewes, the neighbours wanted to get away, and the farmer now began equipping his son for the journey, and gave him good provisions, amongst which was the smoked carcass of one wether. The lad bade farewell to his parents, and they gave him God-speed, and off he started with the neighbours, for the mountain-travel.

When they had journeyed for two days, they made a halt, and pitched their tent, and, this done, the two neighbours agreed to take to themselves all the provisions of the young man; and so they did, leaving him only the thighs of the wether.

He, of course, was greatly amazed, but, as it could not be helped, was obliged to put up with it. When these two rascals had taken their stolen meals, they lay down to sleep, but the lad could enjoy neither his meals nor his sleep, being so sorely put out by his companions. After some while, a brown dog came to the tent, and having snuffed all round it, lifted up the door of the tent with its nose. The boy threw the thigh which he had left of the carcass, to the dog, who snapped it up, and, running away with it, disappeared. When he had remained awake, yet some time, in a sad state of mind, he went out of the tent to look after the horses, which were grazing close by.

Then he saw a man, of great growth, coming towards him, followed by a brown dog.

The stranger greeted the boy kindly, and asked him different questions, to which the lad answered modestly and shrewdly. At last he told the stranger all about himself, and chiefly how matters stood just now with him. The stranger then offered the youth to give him day-labour with him, to which he gladly consented. So he took his horses, saddled and loaded them, and went away with the stranger, not bidding farewell to his companions, who were sound asleep in the tent.

This day and the ensuing night they travelled together in a direction straight across the common road, the stranger being a nimble walker, till at last they came to a little cottage in a valley; there were beautiful grounds and meadows round the cottage, but it seemed as if fog covered all the view in the distance.

When they arrived at this place, a young and beautiful maiden stood outside, who came towards them and welcomed the man as if he were her father. The man now shewed the young man to a storehouse, where a bed was made ready for him to sleep in, and he told his daughter at the same time, to bring refreshment for the youth and to wait on him carefully. The young man went to bed and slept soundly through the night.

Next morning the elder man came to him, saying he had decided upon what work to give him to do in the summer. The young man got up as quickly as he could, and went out with the other, who shewed him large meadows, flat and thickly grown with grass, which he bade him have finished mowing before the people made the autumn search for their sheep in the walks and wilds. This the youth thought would be a task by far beyond his powers. After that, the man gave him a scythe and a handle, both good, but his daughter he bade rake up the hay after him. He then strongly warned the youth not to show any curiosity in spying about the ways of his household.

Now the farmer's son dwelt here, cutting grass every day, save on the Sabbath, and sleeping in the storehouse at night. And in all this time he saw no one but the old man and his daughter, nor was he ever aware of there being any other creature save the dog, in the place. He cut the grass and the girl raked the hay; but one thing astonished him,—that, as soon as the grass was cut and had been raked, it vanished. He found his lonely life rather strange, but not altogether uninteresting. Before the time appointed, he had finished his work, and the old man came to him, and looked glad, and thanked him for his summer-work, saying it was now time for him to go home, in order not to be left behind his companions, who, he added, had slept all the summer in the tent, until two weeks back, when they had awoke, and gone to the North, but had, of course, got no labour, the summer being quite lost, and now they were on their way southward again.

He then handed the young man his summer-wages; namely, two casks, each of which contained two-and-a-half hundredweight of butter. Besides these, he gave him two old wethers, and liberal provisions for the journey. After this he brought to him his horses, and a grey one of his own besides, a comely creature. This old nag, he said, would carry his loads of butter, and he himself would accompany him to the spot where they first met.

When they were ready to start, the old man brought to the farmer's son, a horn, and asked him to drink. The youth took a draught from it, and felt that his strength was greatly increased, all at once. Then the old man bade him wrestle with him; but, when they had wrestled a short while, the young man got the worst of it. On this, the old man told him to take another draught from the horn, and then they should try another wrestling. The farmer's son did as the other bade him, and now he wrestled a great deal better than after the first draught. Having taken a third draught, the youth wrestled long and powerfully with his old friend.

And now the old man said: "Two or so, of a goodly strength, will hardly overcome you, if you should have to encounter them on your journey."

Then the youth took leave of the old man's daughter, and kissed her, and mounted his own horse, leading the loaded grey nag, by the reins. The old man walked by his side, the brown dog driving the wethers before them. When they came to the spot where they had met first, the old man took leave of the lad, letting his horse carry the loads on before, and the dog drive the wethers. He asked the young man to be his day-labourer the next summer, which the latter promised him, and they appointed the place where they were now standing, for the next meeting, and then one bade the other farewell.

When the young man had gone on his way for a while he met two men, who were no other than his old companions going southwards, with small luck and meagre wages. They welcomed him, and thinking he had brought back a great deal, asked him where he had been through the summer. He said, it little mattered to them. Then they said he must share his wages with them. He answered that he was quite unprepared for so doing. Then said they, strength should decide the matter. He replied that he was quite ready to yield to that decision of the matter, and that he had to reward them for their past meanness.

Now they all dismounted from their horses, and the two ruffians thought to take, with ease, all his wages for themselves. But he caught each of them by the hand, and hurled them a long way off. They hurt themselves mightily, and found it no easy thing to get on their legs again, nor did they think of encountering a second time, this giant's strength; so the young man continued his journey unmolested. When he came home, he let free the grey horse, and off it went, followed by the brown dog. His parents were very glad to see him return from his labour, so richly rewarded, and all were amazed at the size and full growth of the wethers he brought with him, as nothing in the breed of sheep had ever been seen so fine. He told but little about his travels, or where he had dwelt during the summer.

The next winter he spent at home with his parents, and the earlier part of the summer, and he was deemed above everybody, in strength and manliness.

At the same time as on the year before, he went away, and having got to the appointed place in right time, met there his former master, and they welcomed each other well. He went then, with his master, to the cottage, where everything was in the same order as the year before, and no one was to be seen, but the old man's daughter, who welcomed the young man heartily.

When the youth had rested himself a little, the old man gave him his scythe again, and shewed him the fields he would have to mow in the same space of time as last summer, but they were now very much larger than before. He began his work, and cut the grass all the summer, and the old man's daughter raked, and, as formerly, the hay vanished when it had been raked.

He finished his work this time, a week earlier than he had done last summer.

Now, as the farmer's son sat in the storehouse, the old man came to him, and thanked him for his summer-labour, and said he wondered how quickly he had got through it, in spite of his having spent many an hour in talking with the damsel; adding that he saw clearly that their joint labour was not irksome to them. This, the farmer's son did not deny.

The old man said he had done well in trying to spy but nothing of the home-matters, however strange he might find the whole way of life at this farm. Furthermore, he now told him frankly that he had many servants at home, and had had twelve daughters by his wife, of whom eleven were already married in that valley, there being the same number of farms therein. But the twelfth of his daughters, whom the lad knew, was unmarried, and the youngest of them. This daughter he would give to the youth, as it was the wish of both, he thought, to be joined in marriage. The young man was glad, and consented with all his heart to this arrangement of the matter.

After this, in order to prove what he had told the youth about the valley, the old man took forth from his pocket a glass, and bade him look into it. Then a wide view of a great and beautiful valley opened to him, and he saw the twelve farms, and many people engaged about the valley, in haymaking. He also saw, wide over the pastures, scattered herds of cattle, and horses, and large flocks of sheep, and he saw too, that many people were engaged in haymaking at the old man's own farm; but no sooner had he moved the glass from his eye, than all vanished and looked as before.

The next day, the farmer's son addressed himself to his journey, with his bride, and the old man equipped them carefully from home. He gave them sixteen wethers of the best kind, which the dog should drive home for them. Besides these, he loaded the grey horse of old with very many costly things, and said he would guide them as far as he had gone the past summer. Now they started off, all three together, till they came to a halting place, where the old man said he would return, but they should have the dog and the horse with them: they would be sure to find their way home again.

The old man took a loving leave, with a fatherly kiss, of them, wishing them all luck and happiness. After this he left them, and the youth went homewards with his bride, the horse carrying the costly loads, and the dog driving the fine wethers before them.

When they arrived, the horse and dog went back again as before. The young couple were gladly welcomed by the young man's parents. His betrothed was looked upon as the best match in that parish, and her dowry was wondered at for its beauty and costliness.

Jón, the Farmer's Son, from Mödrudalr.

There lived once at Mödrudalr a farmer, who had a son by name Jón. This son soon became a stalwart man and hopeful withal. The farmer had three men-servants, and very many sheep, and during the winter, his son watched the wethers, and one of the men the ewes.

They once happened to drive both wethers and ewes together, one winter day, on to their pastures. That day the sky looked gloomy, and was likely to come over with snowstorm, so they did not venture to leave the sheep alone, but stood over them during the day. When noon was past, it came over with so thick a snow-drift and such a gale, that they could manage nothing, and lost all their sheep, scattered hither and thither before the storm. The snowfall was so thick that they could not see each other, but were obliged to call, one to the other, intending to get to the farm. But they soon lost their way, and knew nothing of whither they went; they walked, however, all that afternoon and night, and part of the next day. Then the weather cleared a little, and they found themselves under a mountain slope.

The manservant was so tired, that he could go no farther. Jón made then a little snow-house for his fellow to crawl into, but he himself walked to-and-fro, outside the opening of it. But he soon became tired of this, and said to the man, that he would try to see if he could find no dwelling near there, promising soon to return to him.

So Jón now started off, leaving his fellow behind, and, after a long walk, found a frozen path in the snow, which he followed till he came to some pens, in front of him, late in the evening. At this time, it cleared up more than before, but no farm-house was in sight. Jón thought he would wait till the herdsman came with the sheep to the pens, and walked to-and-fro before the door of it.

At half-nightfall, the storm had abated, and then Jón saw a woman coming, driving before her a large flock of sheep. This greatly astonished him, as he was not wont to see women watch sheep in the winter-time, in his parish. She drove the sheep home to the pen, but Jón hindered them from entering. She therefore asked him wherefore he hindered her from putting the sheep in their pens, as also who he was. He told her his name. She then asked him whence he came and why he was there. He told her that he was from Mödrudalr, and had lost his way and come down thither, and did not know where he was. She said it were better for him to go into the pen, where a bed was to be found, than to stand out in the moonlight, hindering her from putting the sheep in their pen. He then moved from the door and helped her to drive the sheep into two large and roomy pens. When they had put in the sheep, he began talking with her, asking her where her home was.

She answered him that her home was a short distance thence, in a little dale.

"Are there many folk at home?" asked Jón.

She said that her parents were there, her two brothers, and one manservant who wanted to marry her, but she would by no means suffer this, nor would her father. The servant-man, she said, was a bad fellow, who had made her brothers as bad as he was himself.

Jón asked her to help him, and to try to get him home to the farm. But this she refused to do, saying it would cost his life, for most likely her brothers, and no doubt the manservant would kill him, if he let himself be seen at the farm. She said she could give him no better advice than to remain in the pens, the first night at all events, and promised to come there on the morrow, bringing with her, clothes and refreshments. To this Jón gladly agreed, but said he must go for his fellow-traveller whom he had left, and asked her to come with him. This she did, and now they went, through the dark night, with a slight gleam of moonlight but no snowfall, till they came to the snow-hut, Jón being guide. They found the man unable to speak, on account of the cold having worn him out. They therefore carried him, in turns, till they came to the pens. The woman made as good a bed for them as she could, and told them she would come thither next morning, but she should not, she said watch the sheep any more, as it was not her task but that of the men, she having only got leave to do so for to-day, for her amusement. At this, she left them, for home.

Next morning, she came betimes to the pen, and asked Jón how he and the other man were. Jón said that he was quite well, but that his fellow-traveller was dead. The woman then gave Jón a large meat-box, and a double change of clothes, telling him to make the best use of both, since his companion needed neither one nor the other. Jón changed his clothes and refreshed himself from the contents of the box, as he wanted, and was afterwards all sound and well.

Jón now asked the woman to accompany him on the road leading towards his own home. She said she was willing to do so, but would first drive the sheep to their pastures, on the way. She drove the sheep on to the grazing lands, where she left them, in order to accompany Jón on the right way. When the day was drawing to an end, the weather being without snowfall or mist, she said she could go no farther, and must needs go back to her sheep; but she pointed out to Jón the way he was to take, and forthwith parted from him. Jón thanked her kindly for her service, and they parted in love.

So Jón went on his way, walking as fast as he could, till nightfall, when he stopped at a stone, finding himself unable to go any farther. Now it was coming over with snowstorm, and Jón made for himself a snow-hut by the stone, took the box, and eat from it as much as he would. Then he laid himself down to sleep, but he had no peace, for the dead servant-man haunted him all night, hindering him from snatching even a single nap. When the day dawned, he got up and went out of the snow-hut. During the night, a great deal of snow had fallen, but the weather was bright and without fall. He made speedily off for home, taking, as he thought, the right way.

But, noon past, it came over with heavy snowfall and storm, which made him lose his way, and he went on without knowing whither.

Late in the evening, he came unexpectedly to the pens he had left the day before. He now found himself in a most awkward strait, not being able to find out how to account for this bewildering travel, but decided upon waiting for the damsel. At the close of the day, she came with the sheep, in a slight snowfall.

When she arrived at the pens she seemed not a little astonished to see Jón there, and asked why he was there at this time, and how it was that he could not find his way.

He answered that it could not be natural that he should find no way open to him, but the one that led back to these pens.

She replied: "That is your own fault."

Now they put in the sheep, and when they had finished, Jón asked her either to allow him to remain at the pens, or to guide him home to the farm. She answered that she would willingly comply with the first request, but, as to the other, she would never grant it for a moment. She said furthermore, that she should not return to the pens the next morning, for she would not be allowed to watch the sheep any more.

"But," quoth she, "to-morrow, the servant-man will watch the sheep, and you must manage to defend your life against him, as best you can."

Hereupon they parted, she going home to the farm, but he going to bed, and sleeping soundly all night till the next morning. He awoke early, and stepping out from the pen, mounted to the top of it, to look about if any living being were in sight. After some time, he saw a man coming, and he was great of growth and strong-looking. As he drew near, Jón saw that he had in his hand a large pike-staff; and then Jón ran into the pen, shutting the door, and kept as still as death.

When the other came to the door, he opened it and called into the pen: "Is anyone here?"

Jón kept still.

Then the other was going in, poking his pike-staff before him, but Jón, seeing this, rushed forward and caught a strong hold of the staff, the other pulling it towards himself. Now they struggled with the staff for a while, and, at last, Jón managed to pull it out of his foe's hand. When the stranger had lost his staff, he had also lost his courage, and ran off from the pens, with Jón after him; till Jón overtook him and, without ado, thrust the spear through him, thus leaving him dead on the spot. Then he took the dead man and buried him under the wall of the pen. After this, he drove out the sheep to their pastures, and watched them during the day. Late in the evening, he drove the sheep home to the pen again, and, going to bed, slept till next morning.

On the morrow, as early as the first break of day, he got up, and went out to look at the weather, which he found calm and bright. He mounted to the top of the pen and looked about, if by chance he might see anyone coming, and he saw, after a while, a man approaching the pens, bigger and altogether of more stalwart growth than the first, with a staff in his hand. Jón, as before, ran into the shed and shut the door after him.

When the stranger came to the door he opened it, and called into the pen, asking if any one was there.

Jón kept still.

The other then stepped in, poking his pike-staff in front of him, but Jón caught hold of it, and now a violent contest about the staff arose. But although Jón found that this fellow was far stronger than the first one, he nevertheless managed to pull the staff out of his hand. As soon as the dale-dweller had lost his staff, he took to his heels, and ran off from the fold. Jón pursued him and soon overtook him, stabbing him to death with the pike; and then buried him by the side of the other.

After this, he drove the sheep out from their folds to the pastures, and watched over them all day, in pretty clear and bright weather. At nightfall he put the flocks into the pens, and took his food from the meat-box, and then went to bed. Next morning he dressed early, and went out to look at the weather, and found that it was bright and clear. He mounted the shed, as he was wont, and when he had looked about a while, he saw a man, far bigger than the two first, approaching the folds, also with a pike-staff in his hand. Jón, as usual, went in, shut the door, and kept quite still. Then the dale-dweller came to the door, opened it, and called into the pen: "Is anybody here?"

Jón kept still, as before.

The man now entered, thrusting his staff before him, and Jón, as he was wont, grasped it, and, finding that this man was far stronger than the others, had to use all the cunning and strength he had; and, after a long and strong pulling, and turmoil, and fight, he at last got the staff out of the other's hand, whereupon the dale-dweller took to his heels and ran off as quickly as ever he could. Jón ran after him, staff in hand, and, after a long chase, overtook him. The man defended himself gallantly, but Jón dealt him, at length, the death-blow, and then took him to the fold, where he buried him with the others.

After this, Jón drove out the sheep to pasture, watching over them till nightfall, in clear, bright weather, and then drove them home, and having penned them, went to sleep, as he was wont.

Next morning he sallied forth; the weather was gloomy, but, as yet, not much snow fell. He mounted the fold-roof, and saw a woman approaching, and guessed it to be the same with whom he had before spoken. Then he came down and waited outside. The woman came and greeted him, and but a chill greeting it was. Jón answered her greeting, and she asked him if he knew aught about the manservant and her brothers. Jón told her the truth,—that, as he had to fight for his life, he had killed them all. At this news, she waxed somewhat peevish, and said he deserved a meet return for having killed her brothers, but, as to the servant-man, she had nought to say. Jón answered that what had been done could not have been avoided, and prayed the woman to guide him on the right way to his home.

She said it would end as before: "But," quoth she, "if you like to follow me, when I drive the sheep to their grazing, you may do so."

Now they got the sheep out from the folds, and drove them to pastures farther off than formerly, where the woman left them, and guided Jón into the right path; she walking first, and Jón after her. Not a word did they speak together on the way, and thus they went on, till the day was dwindling fast, and a fearful snow-storm was coming over. The damsel had gone farther with Jón, than the first time, and now said she was going no farther, as she must return to the sheep.

She said to him, furthermore: "If the storm be high when you come to the stone where you rested last time, go no farther."

So they parted, and Jón thanked the maiden for all her kindness towards him. Now he walked with all his might, till he came to the stone; when, as night was coming on with snowstorms, he did not trust himself to encounter both, so went into the snow-hut, and prepared it for a night's lodging, as well as he could. He took out his meals, and had a good repast, and when he was satisfied, went to sleep. But now things were no better than before, and the dead man haunted and annoyed him. He therefore had no peace or quiet in his snow-hut, and the next morning, as soon as day broke, he started off, in pretty clear weather; but much snow had fallen, which made it all the more difficult for him to find out by view where he was, or whither he was to go. He, however, took a direction, which, he thought, would surely lead him to the peopled districts.

He now strode on as quickly as he well could, all that day till nightfall, but how great were his astonishment and despair, when he found himself again at the door of the well-known folds! At first, he knew not what to do, but soon determined to wait for the damsel, and after a short while saw her approaching with her flock. When she arrived, she greeted him, asking him if he really were there once more.

"Yes," he said; "I am here once more, and I shall not attempt to get home, for I see that I am hindered by some magic fate."

And then he asked her to help him, and guide him home to her farm.

She said: "It is likelier now that I do this for you, than before," and prayed him to aid her in getting the sheep into the pens, and, when they had finished, bade him come home with her.

Now they walked a while till they saw a lofty farm, into which the damsel entered, leading Jón into a room that was perfectly dark. She told him to sit down on a bed, warning him that he must stay there, until called upon by somebody. After this she stepped out, and locked the room-door. Now Jón sat there, alone in the dark, little amused, and somewhat afraid of the house-master. When he had sat a while, he heard some one step up to the door, and open it. He then saw that this was an elderly woman, tall and stout, but not of evil look. She brought in a dish, full of bread and meat, in one hand, and, in the other, a candle. Silently she came in, and silently put down the food, on a table standing before the bed whereon Jón was sitting; and then she said: "My daughter, but not my sons, have you to thank for this."

This said, she walked away and shut the door. But Jón did not dare to eat the meat, thinking that something baneful might have been put therein. And now he sat for a while, quiet on the bed. Soon, he heard low footsteps outside the room, in the passage, and the door was opened, and the steps came towards him, and, all of a sudden, he was clutched by two strong hands, and lifted into the air, and flung down on his back on the floor, and somebody threw himself on the top of him.

Now Jón found himself in a desperate strait, not being able to defend himself against his unknown foe.

He therefore said: "Whosoever you may be, kill me forthwith, and torture me not."

Then a deep, hollow, goblin-voice answered: "You have deserved that I should kill you in revenge for my sons and my servant-man; but, if I spare your life, thank my daughter for it."

Now Jón understood that this was the old father; and what doubts he had were removed, when the old man told him to stand up, and, taking him by the hand, led him into the family-room. A light was burning in the room, lighting it up from end to end; and two women were sitting there,—the one who had brought Jón his meals, and his acquaintance from the sheepfold. He saw no other human beings there. Both the women received him gladly, and the old man bade him take a seat by his daughter's side, and now waxed cordial and gleesome. He said to Jón that he must watch his sheep that winter, in place of the men whose lives he had taken away; that was the least atonement he could claim for his sons: his daughter should wait upon him, and he himself provide for him his meals. To this, Jón agreed willingly, finding that things had come to a more agreeable issue than ever he had hoped. So Jón stayed there for the rest of the winter, in great happiness and joy, being mighty friendly with the old man's daughter. He watched the sheep every day, till summer began, and the old man was well content with his activity and hardiness. When summer came, and the snow melted away, and the roads got better, Jón wished to move homewards.

When the old man became aware of Jón's home-yearning, he called him aside, into a room apart, and there, opening a chest, took forth a case, which was full of money.

He said to Jón: "This case I will give you, as a reward for your services to me this winter. I must now tell you that it was I who made you lose your way so often, for I knew how far you excelled all youths in your parish, and therefore I wanted to get you here to me, in order that I might give you my daughter, whom I loved most of all my children. I would not, for my life, suffer her to be the servant-man's wife, and I even made the heavy sacrifice of both my sons, in order to have my will carried through."

Jón assented to all, and thanked the old man for his money, but more for his giving him his daughter

"Now," said the old man, "you shall go home to your parents, and dwell there this summer, not telling where or how you have spent the winter; but this is the last time we shall see each other alive, for I have only a short time yet, to live; but I die tranquil since my daughter gets a good husband; and I pray you to come for her next autumn, bringing a coffin with you, for then I shall be dead. But, most of all, I beg you to carry me to the peopled districts, and bury me in the graveyard of Christian folk."

Jón bade farewell to the old man, and his daughter and wife, and started homewards.

He came home to his parents, who were more glad to see him than we can tell, deeming he had been dead long since. He said nothing about his winter-sojourn, but that he had killed a man-servant, and had, nathless, done well.

Now that summer he spent at home.

But in the autumn, having made a coffin, he got six horses with pack-saddles, and two with riding saddles, and made off for the valley. When he came there, the old man had died some days back. Both mother and daughter received him and his fellows warmly. Now Jón put the corpse in the coffin, as best he could, and went away with the mother and daughter, and all that was of any value in the farm, and brought all home to his parents. He buried the old man in a seemly and decent way, and afterwards married the girl, and, beginning farming, became one of the best farmers thereabout.

TALES.

The Story of Mjadveig, Daughter of Mani.

IT is told that, in the days of yore, a king named Máni, governed a certain realm. He had by his queen, a daughter, called Mjadveig, who in early youth was distinguished in all the accomplishments that became a lady of her rank. The king built a fine and costly bower for her, and surrounded her with many a maid-in-waiting. But now it happened that the queen, her mother, fell sorely sick, and died. After her death, the king was so filled with sorrow, that he kept his bed wellnigh every day, and assuredly took no care of the concerns of his realm. But his minister finding everything in the government going desperately wrong, advised him to seek a fitting consort; so he decided upon sending two of his ministers out, to find him one. He gave them a splendid suite, and fitted them out right royally, and they then put to sea. But at sea, they were overtaken by fogs, and losing their course, knew not where they were, or whither to go. At last, they saw land, and steered their vessels thither. They did not know the country, but nevertheless put to shore, where an immense wilderness was opened to their view. Through this they wandered, in search of human dwellings, but found none. At last, they heard harp-playing, so fine, that they had heard nothing like it before, either in beauty or in strangeness. They turned their steps towards the sound, until they came to a place, where they saw a little tent, inwoven with silk. Hurrying to it, they saw that in the tent was a lady sitting. She it was who had drawn from the harp the beautiful tones that had attracted the strangers; and at her side a young girl sat. When the lady saw the men, she was so startled, that she dropped her harp, and fell into a swoon; but, as soon as she had recovered, she asked them whither they were travelling, and wherefore they were there. They said they had missed their course on the sea, having been sent by King Máni, in search of a consort for him, as he had lost his queen, and was in deep sorrow for the bereavement. The king's advisers found this lady very charming, and accordingly asked her who she was, and what were the events of her life. The lady answered their questions by telling that she had once been a queen in that country, but an overwhelming enemy had invaded it, and having laid waste the land, had slain the king in a murderous battle.

After that, the plan of the leader had been, not only to conquer the country, but to marry her also. This, however, had been so much against her will, that, to avoid him, she had taken flight into this wilderness, together with her daughter, and here intended to await her doom. All this the king's advisers found to suit well their views, and deeming this to be a fitting match for King Máni, wooed the lady accordingly for the king. She gave a slow answer, saying that she had little employed her thoughts on marriage; but to their entreaties she at last yielded. So she embarked with them, and a fair wind they had to the realms of King Máni. When people saw the ships approaching the shore, the king drove in his state carriage down to the beach, and no sooner had he caught a glimpse of his affianced bride, than all his former sorrow was gone. He returned glad to the castle, and great preparations were made for a grand wedding-feast, which lasted for a fortnight. When the feast was over, the king went on a progress, claiming the forgotten taxes of his dominions.

Now the story turns to Mjadveig, the daughter of Máni. One day, while she dwelt in her bower, the queen came to her and told her that she found the loneliness of the court irksome, and therefore proposed a walk outside the town, to divert them, bidding Mjadveig go with her, which she was willing enough to do. The queen, too, allowed her daughter to go with them. Now they walked, all three together, and the queen was very kind to her step-daughter. But when they had gone a good way out of the town, the queen asked Mjadveig to change dresses with her daughter. So Mjadveig took off her own dress and gave it to the queen's daughter, taking her's in exchange. When this was done, the queen said: "Now do I put that charm on you, that my daughter shall so have Mjadveig's face, and look, and mien, that no one may be able to tell one from the other." Then the queen and her daughter bound Mjadveig, hand and foot, leaving her helpless, where she was, on the ground. But they themselves went home to the city, and the queen put her daughter into Mjadveig's bower. All thought that Mjadveig herself was there, but the bower-maidens found her temper rather changed by the walk. They suspected nothing, however, about the change, and knowing nothing about a strange girl that had come with the queen, did not trouble themselves to inquire into a mystery to which there was no clue.

Now Mjadveig remained, as before said, on the place, till she fell asleep from sorrow and despair. Then she dreamt that her dead mother came to her, speaking to her words of pity and compassion. She furthermore dreamt that she undid her fetters and gave her a cloth, upon which there were some provisions, telling her daughter never quite to empty this cloth, nor to let it be seen by anyone, and mostly to beware of her stepmother and her daughter. Then Mjadveig awoke, and all was as she had dreamt it.

Now it is told of the queen that she had some suspicion of Mjadveig's being alive, and therefore sent her daughter, on the sly, to pry about her. She went therefore away, and having found Mjadveig and seen what a change had come upon her, used all sorts of blandishments and crafty arts, to find out how this change had been brought about. She said to Mjadveig: "Ill did my mother, in betraying you. I will share this exile with you, for we may be able to put things right, when the king returns from his travel. But henceforth we will share one and the same fate." Mjadveig, albeit she disliked the maiden's speech, was obliged to put up with this plan. After a while, the maiden lay down, and soon made as if she had fallen asleep. When Mjadveig thought she was soundly napping, she moved a little way from the sleeper, took the cloth and began eating her meal. Now the queen's daughter had got what she wanted, and rushing up, she snatched the cloth out of Mjadveig's hands, and ran away homewards, with her booty, saying exultantly: "Never shall this meat be for Mjadveig's eating."

Now Mjadveig was little better off than before, and in her helplessness, wandered about without any design, until, overpowered by weariness, she dropped off to sleep.

Then she had again a dream, wherein her mother came to her, saying: "You have done incautiously; but, as what is done cannot be helped, we will take things as they now stand, and you shall go straight down to the sea. You will find there, a tongue of land, stretching out into the waves, joined to the land by a narrow pass. On this tongue of land, you will find a small house, locked, but with the key standing in the door. Then you shall go three times forwards and three times backwards, round the house, touching the key each time, as you pass by. If you do this, the house will open at the last touch of the key, and there you shall dwell for a while, and you will not find it a wearisome sojourn; for:—

"There cuckoos sing,
There onions spring,
There wethers shed their covering."

Now Mjadveig awoke, and went the way that had been pointed out to her in the dream. When she had reached the end of her journey, she found and did everything, just as her mother had bidden her, and, in her new abode, each day was happier than the last.

But it happened once, as she had gone into the country for her pleasure, that she saw many ships, sailing along the coast, and steering towards the harbour. At this sight she became so frightened, that she ran, as if for her life, home to her house; and so fast she ran, that one of her shoes got loose, and she lost it in her running. This shoe of hers was of gold.

The leader of this fleet was a prince who came into these realms, in order to woo Mjadveig, the daughter of Máni, to wife. When he had disembarked, and started to the town, he found on his way, a woman's golden shoe, so delicately shaped, that he made a vow only to marry the lady whom the shoe was found to fit. Now he went to the king's palace and asked for Mjadveig, daughter of Máni, to wife, but said, at the same time, that he had made a vow, never to marry any lady but that one whom the golden shoe, which he had found on his way to the town, should fit.

The queen asked the prince to favour her with a sight of the shoe.

He did so, and when she saw it, she said:—

"Oh! I know that shoe very well: it was lost by Mjadveig, my daughter, once, when she was out walking,—a fault which young people are very apt to commit."

Then she went to her daughter, and taking her into a room apart, told her all about the prince and his vow. So the maiden began trying the shoe on, but, squeeze and thrust as much as she would, half of her foot was left out of the shoe, and getting it in was out of the question. Then the queen cut her daughter's heel and toes off, and so managed to get the shoe on. This treatment the daughter found rather unmotherly, but the queen told her that she had to suffer this for a great boon, the marriage with the prince. Then she dressed her in the gayest attire and presented her to the prince, in the palace, shewing him that the shoe fitted, which the prince did not at the time doubt, as it was on the princess's foot,

Then the prince wooed, in form, Mjadveig (as he thought) daughter of Máni, and got everybody's full leave. The prince would take his bride with him, to his own country, and said he would come again, in order to bid people to his wedding-feast.

But as he passed by the place where stood the house of the real Mjadveig, the king's daughter, he heard a great sound of birds chirping together, and, being himself a good scholar in the language of birds, he began to pay heed now to their chirping. And the meaning of what they chirped was this:—

"Heel-chopped-off sits in the stern,
And full of blood is her shoe.
Here, on the sea-side
Does Mjadveig abide,
A far better bride
to woo.
Turn back then, King's son; O turn!"

At first he would not believe this bird-chatter; but when he began to look into the thing, he found that the birds had told the bare truth of the lady whom he had on board.

Then the prince took a spell-dissolving plate, and put it upon her shoulders, and at once she turned into a huge and ugly troll, and was now forced to tell the whole story of herself and of her mother's guile. After this he killed her, and took the body, and salted it down, the flesh filling no less than twelve barrels; and this cargo he put upon one of the vessels which had no freight on board, save some gunpowder.

Then he launched a boat into the sea, and rowing ashore, found the little house. The birds told him how to open it, and, when he had done so, he found therein a maiden of wonderful beauty, and asked her name. She answered that her name was Mjadveig, and that she was the daughter of King Máni, and added that she had fled to this lone place, on account of her stepmother's cruelty.

The prince now told her all his history, and what he had done with his bride: he also took forth the shoe, and trying it on Mjadveig's foot, found, not only that it fitted, but that she had another golden shoe to match.

Now the prince found himself, by virtue of his vow, affianced to this lady, and, by her consent, took her on board his vessel, and went, on the sly, with his ships into a hidden firth of the sea, where he retired awhile. After that, he sailed into the harbour of the capital, and went to the king's palace, and bade him, together with his queen, to his wedding.

The king received the invitation gladly, but not so the queen: she excused herself on the plea of being unaccustomed to the sea; wherefore she would rather stop at home than undertake so long a sea voyage. But the prince so explained to the queen, how glad her daughter would be if she came herself, that she at last yielded to his showings, and promised to come.

Now all the king's family drove in royal carriages down to the shore, and embarked and put to sea.

On the voyage, the queen waxed so sullen that she paid no heed to anybody. The prince went to her secretly, and begged her to tell him the cause of her grief. She shewed great shyness, and unwillingness to talk about this matter, but at last spoke, however, and said: "My health is so strangely disordered, that I can never eat heartily at the usual meal-hours: the cause of this I deem to be sea-sickness. Now I would that you should help me out of this strait."

The prince said he feared he had nothing to offer her, that suited her taste and appetite. He said, however, that on one of his vessels was some salt meat to be had, but that being raw, it would hardly be of any use to her.

At this news she brightened up, and said she could easily boil it herself; but she did not forget to beg the prince to be silent about these trifles.

Now the queen enjoyed highly the salted meat, and was always the most hideous of trolls while eating the meat, but changed her shape afterwards. This went on for eleven days. The twelfth day, when she was devouring the twelfth barrel, the prince took King Máni with him, and shewed him the cannibal in her fiendish feast at the barrel, and told the king how often she had done this on the voyage. When the king saw that he had thus been charmed by these trolls, he was astonished beyond telling. Now they set fire to the meat-vessel, while the troll-queen was yet on board it, and in a short time it was blown into the air; so thus the devilish troll found a speedy end. After this, King Máni asked the prince how he had come to know these wonders. The prince told the king all about his discovery, and having taken him to Mjadveig, recounted to him all the wiles of the trolls, which amazed the king even more. Thereafter, they sailed away into the prince's dominions, and a wedding-feast was held, which lasted for a month. At the end of the rejoicings, King Máni went away, honoured with many gifts and precious things. He came home, and governed his realm, to a high age; and henceforth he is out of our tale.

Of the prince we have to relate that he took the kingdom after his father; and then one year passed without aught important happening, save that Mjadveig was delivered of a fair male child.

Some time after that, she went to the bath with one of her maidens, but, when she came to the bath, she wanted soap, and, therefore, sent the servant home for it, and waited in the bath alone.

Then there came to her a woman, who greeted her courteously, asking her to exchange dresses with her.

This Queen Mjadveig did.

Then the woman put upon herself, by magic spells, all the mien and look of the queen, who, in her turn, was transformed into the woman's shape, and charmed away, and, from that very hour, vanished. Nobody knew aught of this change, but, after this, a general dislike of the new queen prevailed, which is not to be wondered at, when one thinks who this new queen was.

Now must we tell that, when the prince found Mjadveig in her house on the tongue of land, he thought the house so charming, that he could not do without it, and accordingly moved it away by his secret arts, and placed it beside the queen's hall. Here it was surrounded by the same beautiful nature as before, and while all things went smoothly, and the real Queen Mjadveig was there—

Onions would spring;
And cuckoos would sing;
And wethers would shed their covering.

But now, this change came to pass:—

Onions would not spring;
And cuckoos would not sing;
And wethers would not shed their covering.
And the baby-prince, as he lay
In his cradle, kept peace, nor night, nor day.

And everything in the kingdom, from that time forth, seemed to go wrong.

But, one day, it so chanced that the king's herdsman was walking along the sea-side. Suddenly he saw that a glass-hall rose to the top of the water, from beneath some steep rock; and inside it was a woman who was so like queen Mjadveig, that the man thought he could not tell one from the other. Round this floating glass-hall was an iron chain, the end of which was held by a hideous giant, who hauled all back into the deep, after a while.

The herdsman was amazed, and marvelled much at the sight, and went on, musing and pondering over it, till he came to a brook; and here he stopped in a trance of thought.

While he stood here, he saw a child coming to draw water from the brook. He gave the child a gold finger-ring, and it was greatly pleased at the gift, and soon disappeared into a rock which stood hard by.

Immediately afterwards, there came out a dwarf, who greeted the man and thanked him for his kindness to his child, and asked what he would wish him to do for him in return.

The herdsman begged him to explain to him what it was that he had seen coming up to the surface of the sea from beneath the steep rocks yonder.

The dwarf said that it was queen Mjadveig, charmed thither by evil trolls; but a giantess, sister to the giant whom he had seen holding the end of the chain, had taken Mjadveig's place, at the court. The dwarf said, furthermore, that the giant had yielded to Mjadveig's entreaties, in allowing her to come on shore, four times, and had promised her that she should be released from her bondage, if she should be so lucky as to find somebody to release her. "But," added the dwarf, "she has already been three times on land, and to-morrow she comes ashore for the fourth and last time."

Now the man asked the dwarf to give him good redes, as to how to release the queen from her horrible bondage. The dwarf gave him an axe, and told him to cut the chain with it, when the glass-room should come up to the land next day.

So the man waited on the same stone, the whole night. Then he went to the place where the glass-case was wont to come on land, and, after a little while, up it came to the edge of the sea-rocks. The man lost no time in using his axe, and easily cut through the chain. But, no sooner had he cut through the chain, than the giant came up in a wild rage, ready to slay him who had dared to break his chain.

But then came the little dwarf, with a small bag, the contents of which he flung into the giant's face. This at once made him blind, and as he writhed and twisted with the pain of the dust, he rolled over the edge of the rocks, into the sea, and gave up the ghost.

After this they took Mjadveig to the stone, where the dwarf dwelt, and here she tarried, while the dwarf and the herdsman went home to the town.

When they got there, they put a magic board across the shoulders of the supposed queen, and, at once, she turned into an ugly giantess, and was put in prison, and made to tell the story of her life.

She then told how she had dealt with Mjadveig, and where the abode of her brother, the giant, was; adding, too, that king Máni's latter queen had been their sister. "It was therefore," she said, "that I did thus to Mjadveig, that I might have vengeance on her."

At this the young king was mighty wroth, and had the monster shamefully killed.

Now the herdsman came to the king, and asked what he deemed the meed of him to be, who might save Mjadveig from her magic spells.

The king said: "I would reward him with much wealth, with an earl's title, and with a goodly share of my realm, to rule over."

Hearing this, the herdsman was not long in fetching the queen, and giving her back to the king, her loving husband.

There was then, at court, greater joy than words can tell. When the queen had come back:—

Cuckoos would sing;
Onions would spring;
And wethers would shed their covering.
And the baby-prince, as he lay
In his cradle, kept peace, both night and day.

From this time forth, the queen lived happily, to a high age. The herdsman was duly rewarded. And here ends the tale of Mjadveig, daughter of Máni.

THE STORY OF TÍSTRAM, AND ISÓL THE BRIGHT.

A KING and queen once ruled over a country. They had no issue, and this grieved the king much, so that he accused his queen of being the cause of it.

Once the king went on an expedition, and, when he took leave of the queen, said to her: "If you do not happen to be with child when I return, it will be your bane."

The queen was filled with sorrow at his words, and wept bitterly.

One evening, she was sitting outside her palace, and a woman came to her, saying: "Why dost thou weep?"

The queen told her why she wept.

Then the strange woman bade her come with her, which she did, and they walked down to the sea. There, was standing a little boat, which the stranger launched, and bade the queen step into. After that, she rowed, till they saw land, where, on the shore, were many silken tents.

The strange woman gave the queen an attire of blue and red silk, having on herself a black one.

Now the owner of these tents was none other than the queen's own husband, the king.

Then the two dames walked in front of the camp. When the king's servants saw them, they ran off to the king, telling him that two beautiful ladies were walking in front of the camp.

The king said: "Bring me the fairer of the maidens."

They did so, and the king made her share his couch for that night. But, at day-dawn, the elder dame took the queen silently by the hand, and, leading her away, rowed her to the same shore whence they had started the day before. When they came to land, the old woman bade the queen rejoice, in that now she was with child.

Some time after this, the king came home, and behaved to his wife as he had done of yore; who, in due time, was delivered of a daughter, and died.

Now the princess was brought up at her father's court, and, by reason of her beauty, was called Isól the Bright. It was early in life her employment to nurse, and wait on the sick. Along the coast were built hospitals, whose inmates she often used to visit.

Once, as she walked along by the sea, she chanced upon a shrine, wherein she thought she heard a child's screaming. The princess had a fine castle of her own, and two maids-in-waiting, named Eyja and Freyja. She bade the maids to take up the shrine, and carry it to her castle, but they laughed and mockingly told her, that it badly became her, a princess, to carry mussel-chests home, from the beach, to her royal abode. At this, Isól waxed angry, and seizing, herself, the shrine, carried it home to her castle, under her arm. There she opened it, and lo! what should she see, but a lovely boy in it, of wondrous beauty, and an inscription, in letters of gold, on the inside of the lid:—"This boy is hight Tístram." An apple was lying by the child's lips, which it had had in its mouth, but had dropped when Isól stumbled on the shrine. She was glad of the prize she had found, and her maids were dumb with astonishment. Then the Princess Isól went to her father, asking his leave to bring up this child, until it should be twelve years of age.

Now this boy was of royal family. The midwife had exposed the child, formerly, because he was so handsome, putting a dead child of her own in its place. Then that king waxed so wroth, that he killed his own queen; but, having lost, a few days afterwards, a battle against some pirates, was killed himself.

Once, when the king, the father of Isól, was walking along the sea-shore, he saw before him a fair lady, combing her hair with a golden comb. He went towards her, and kissed her, and asked her to come with him, but she wept, and acted as one who was in great sorrow. He comforted her as well as he could, and said he would even make her his own queen. Then the lady smiled, and thought she could carry out her plans.

She had a daughter, by name Isóta the Black, but of this daughter she did not tell the king, who married her that very day. To this wedding Isól did not go, as she always dwelt in her castle, save when she walked into the forest, for her pleasure.

When the king and his new queen had lived together one year, the latter became silent and sullen towards her husband, and he made many close and fond enquiries about the cause of her sullenness. She answered that she found he heeded little his lands and dominions. At these words he wondered, and fitted out an expedition, taking Tístram, who was now twelve years old, with him.

Isól missed the youth sadly, and parted from him in tears, together with all her bower-maidens. But before they parted, Tístram and Isól had sworn, one to the other, endless faith and love.

Now the fleet put to sea.

But the queen was not idle, all this time. She drove her thralls into the forest, and bade them make a large and deep grave, and cover it over, first with a net, and then with straw and faggots. The thralls did as they were bidden, and when they had finished, they told the queen.

The next day, in fine weather, the step-mother went to Isól's castle, and paid the step-daughter a visit.

Isól welcomed her heartily, but, having lost her dear friend, was few-spoken; wherefore her step-mother tried everything in her power to make her merry and gleesome. So she invited Isól to take a walk in the forest, with her maids.

To this Isól agreed, and they started, the queen at Isól's right hand; after them came her maids, and Isóta the Black walked at Freyja's left. They walked and walked, together, till suddenly Isól and her maids fell into the hidden pit.

Then the queen and her daughter roared with trollish laughter, and the step-mother cried out: "Now you have just got what you wanted. Instead of Isól the Bright, who was intended for prince Tístram, Isóta the Black shall marry him."

After this, they covered the pit up, and went home highly pleased at having so well finished their work; and, when they got home, the queen threatened to kill everyone who should even mention Isól by name; and Isóta dwelt in Isól's castle.

Now the king returned from the expedition, and Tístram with him.

The queen and her daughter went down to the shore, to welcome the king, and the royal party were taken in golden carriages, back to the palace.

Tístram asked where Isól was; but, instead of answering him, the queen gave him a goblet of some drink. When he had drunk, he suddenly underwent a strange change, for he had now not the faintest remembrance of Isól, his affianced bride. He now dwelt with the king, enjoying all sorts of pleasures; and, as the queen was for ever urging him to marry Isóta, he at last promised to do so, for he had no remembrance of his betrothed.

Isóta was strangely eager in begging him to have the marriage performed, the sooner the better.

Now we must return to Isól and her maids.

For a long time, they were shut up in the covered pit, and, at last, Eyja and Freyja died.

But Isól took forth from her pocket a pair of scissors, which her mother had given her as a teething-gift, telling her afterwards never to part with it. With this pair of scissors, she cut steps for herself, whereby she mounted up from the pit; but, when she had climbed to the edge of it, she lost her scissors, and being faint and weary, could not, for her life, undertake a new descent into the hated pit, so she left her scissors there, and went away, walking for a long time, till she came to an open space in the wood.

Here she sat down, thinking what she should do, and at last bethought her of finding out some way of disguising herself, and thus getting home to the town. She therefore made herself a dress of wild-leaves, and, having finished her dress, went to the town, and got through the palace, into the kitchen, where she found the cook-maid.

She asked the ragged cook to give her something to eat, promising her that she would, in return, mend her torn clothes for her.

This the old cook-maid agreed to.

Now Isól patched and sewed so well, that none could remember having seen any needlework like it before.

The time fixed for the marriage of Tístram and Isóta was drawing near, and Isóta was ordered by her betrothed to make their wedding attire.

Isóta was in a desperate strait; not that anything lacked for making the dresses perfect and becoming to royal folk, but she was no mistress of sewing, being more wont to keep company with thralls, than to apply herself to useful work.

In her distress, she went to the old cook-maid, and asked if she could not give her some good advice.

The cook said that she had, somewhere about, an old woman who very well understood how to make clothes.

At this Isóta was much rejoiced, and gave the stuffs to the cook, who, in her turn, gave them to Isól, asking her to make them up. Now Isól made the clothes in that way, that every seam in the bridegroom's clothes was lined with gold, while there was none in the bride's dress.

When she had finished the clothes, she gave them to the old cook, who brought them again to Isóta. When Isóta had looked at them, she waxed very wroth, seeing that the bridegroom's dress was so gay, while her's was so plain; but there was nothing to be done, as the wedding could not be put off, because forsooth, Isóta was going to be delivered of a child, at any hour.

However, the wedding, as it was, had been delayed too long, for, the night before it, she gave birth to a slave-begotten child.

Now she bethought herself of sending for the strange woman who had made the bridal clothes, and asked her to dress in the bride's dress, and to take her place, only for that day, it being the day of her honour. This she wished much the strange woman to do for her, as she herself was weak after having given birth to the child. But she bade her, by all means, to avoid speaking a word to the bridegroom, for she was afraid that thereby the whole matter might come out, and Tístram leave her alone.

Isól did as she was bidden.

Now the wedding was performed, and, after it, the young couple took a walk in the forest, with a great suite following them. Once, in their walk, they happened to pass by the ruins of a house, and the bride said:—

"Once wert thou wont on earth to shine,
But now in the fold
Of the dusky mould
Art thou wrapt, O bower of mine."

Tístram asked her what she said.

She remained silent, and they walked on till they came to a brook. Then she said:—

"The brook still rolls its waves of light,
Whereby Tístram and Isól the Bright
Faith and love to each other sware.
The ring gave he into my hand there,
And I into his the glove.
Surely thou mightest remember now these pledges of our love!"

Then he asked her what it was she was so often saying, but she remained silent.

Sometime after, they passed a large pit. She looked towards it, and said:—

"Eyja and Freyja, my bower-maidens twain,
Lie here, never to rise again.
My pair of scissors with them I left,
And quitted them both of life bereft."

He asked her then, what she was saying that he might not hear. But she remained silent as before.

After that they went home.

In the evening, Isól went to Isóta and told her that she had done her task for her, and that it was now time to go to bed.

Now Isóta, by dint of overstraining her little strength, got on her clothes, and went to the bedroom in order to go to bed.

Tístram was already in bed, and just as she would step in after him, he said: "Wait! you do not share my bed till you have told me the words you said at the ruins." She was astonished, and started back, on hearing this speech, but soon gaining her calmness, said: "Oh, I have forgotten my finger-gold; wait till I have fetched it."

She went out and asked Isól why she had not kept silent as she had been bidden to do, and would know what she had said at the ruins. Isól repeated her own words, and then Isóta returned to the chamber, and, having repeated the words to the bridegroom, said: "Now I will go to bed." But he said: "No! tell me first what you said at the brook."

She made again as if she had forgotten something, and went out foaming with rage, and said to Isól, forgetting all good words: "What the devil! did you jabber by the brook?"

Isól told her what she had said, and was obliged to repeat her words four times before Isóta could learn them.

Then she returned striding to the room, and said: "Why, I did not say much, I think," and repeated the words. Being now very cold, she wanted to get into bed, as she said she was not at all well. But he answered: "No! not till you have told me what you said by the pit."

So she went out for the third time.

Now the prince growing suspicious about this, got up, and seizing his sword, stole quietly after her. He soon heard her scolding some one, and by listening nearer, heard her saying: "This must I, in my weak health, suffer from him, all because of your gabbling. Then Isól told her what her words by the pit had been, and as Isóta returned, in order to repeat them to Tístram, he stabbed her with his sword, in the door.

After this, he went to the queen's bed and killed her also.

Next, he went to Isól, without knowing as yet who she was, and putting his sword to her breast, said he would slay her, if she did not tell him the truth. This Isól did, and there was a joyful meeting of two loving hearts. They now presented themselves to the king, who was in bed, and he was more glad to see his daughter, than words can tell.

After this, when his father-in-law died, Tístram became king, and led a happy and lucky life with his queen, to a high age.

HISTORY OF LÍNEIK AND LAUFEY.

IN the days of yore, a king and his queen ruled over a great and wealthy realm. Their names have not been rcorded, but it is told that they had two children, a son and a daughter, both of whom were of age when this tale begins. The king's son was hight Sigurdr, and his daughter, Líneik. They were mighty well endowed and accomplished children in every way, and you would have to go far to find any of their own age, to match them. The children loved each other so deeply, that they never would part, so the king had a bower built for them, fine and costly, and gave them their own servants, as many as they wanted.

Now time passed on without anything notable happening, until the queen was thrown on to a sick-bed, by a fever. She called the king to her, and told him that she feared this would be her bane. "I have two things to ask of you," said the queen, "before I die, which I hope you will bear in mind, as they are my last wishes. The first is that, if you marry again, you will not choose a wife from small towns or lone islands, but in large cities and great nations, and then she will prove a good one to you. The other thing is, that you will take all possible pains in bringing up our children, for I deem that hereafter they will afford you the greatest pleasure and consolation,"

Having thus spoken, the queen died.

The king's grief was deep and true, and little regard did he pay thenceforth to the ruling of his kingdom.

Some time after this, it happened one day, that the king's first-minister came to him and told him that the people were grumbling and wroth that the whole government went astray, as the king paid no heed to his duties, on account of his grief and regret for the late queen. "It is surely more king-like," said the first-minister, "to pluck up some spirit, and banish grief from your mind, and to search for a wife, with whom you could live in honour and happiness."

"This is a matter of great difficulty," answered the king; "but, as you have once made mention of it, I think it best to throw upon you the honour and carrying out of it. I therefore give you the command, to choose a fit wife for me; but I must warn you not to seek for her in small towns, or in lone islands."

Now the first-minister made ready and was equipped in fine style, and given a good suite, and then put to sea. But when he had sailed for a while, he was surrounded by such a fog that he lost his course, and knew not where he was, or whither he went. After a month's aimless wanderings, he, one day, suddenly saw land before him, but knew not at all the coast. He found a fine harbour and went ashore, and there pitched his tent. No living beings did his suite find, and all of them thought that this must be a desert island.

When the others had gone to rest, the minister went out into the country, and before he had gone far, he heard such sweet music that he thought he had never heard the like of it before. He walked towards the sound, and wandered on, till he came to an open space in the forest. Here he found a woman sitting, so noble and fine-looking, that he thought he never had seen such a beauty, and on her footstool was sitting a beautiful young girl, who sang to the music.

The minister saluted the woman courteously, and she nobly returned his greeting, and looked on him with a gentle face.

The woman then asked the minister how he was faring and what his errand was. He told her truly what was his errand, and what in the king's life had brought about this sending.

Then the lady said: "How like is the king's lot to mine! I was married to a good king that ruled over this country, but Vikings made an in-raid into his realms, and killed him, and conquered the land, but I fled away with this young maiden, my daughter."

As the young damsel heard these last words, she said to the lady: "Dost thou tell truth, now?"

But the other only dealt her a goodly slap on the ear, and said: "Remember what thou hast promised."

The minister now asked the lady's name, and she said it was Blávör, but that of her daughter, Laufey.

The first-minister had a long talk with this lady, and finding her clever and wise, thought within himself, that he might never have a fairer chance of securing a wife for his king. He therefore wooed her on behalf of his king. He had no trouble in gaining her consent, nor had he to wait long for her to get ready, for she said she was alboun to go with him at once.

"For," said she, "I have all my precious things with me, but, as to followers, I care for none save my daughter Laufey."

And, without delay, they went with the minister to the beach, and he gave orders to strike the tents, and hoist the sails, and put to sea in all haste. As they sailed away, the fog cleared up, and they saw that they had been upon a desert rock surrounded by steep cliffs, but paid no further heed to it. A fair breeze too sprang up, and when they had sailed for six days they saw land ahead, and soon knew it for their own, and that they were sailing straight up to the capital, where their king lived.

Having gained the harbour, they let fall the anchor, and the minister sent messengers home into the city to tell their arrival. The king was very glad, and dressing in his state robes, went out with a splendid suite to receive his bride. But as the king approached, and was midway between the town and the shore, he was met by the prime-minister leading the ladies, one on each side, dressed in the gayest way possible. When the king saw all this richness and beauty, he was filled with joy; and when he saw the elder lady, who was far lovelier even than the younger, he thought he tasted the bliss of heaven. He welcomed the minister and the ladies with the greatest gladness, and forgot, from sheer joy, to ask from what country they came. He took them home to the palace and had the richest apartments prepared for them. Then a great wedding-feast was got ready, and all the great people were bidden; but it is not told that the king's children, Líneik and Sigurdr, were there. They had neither of them yet come to welcome Blávör; and the king, who did nothing but talk with his bride, had pretty well forgotten all about them.

Now the wedding-feast passed brightly and joyously, and at the end of it, the guests were honoured with fine parting-gifts; but the king, as soon as the feast was over, began to busy himself quietly about the affairs of his country. The queen shared in the government with the king, and folk thought that she spoilt more than she mended; and thus some time passed on.

The queen waxed very ambitious and tyrannical, insomuch that the king began to see that his wife would be less profitable to him than he had at first thought.

The queen paid no heed whatever to the royal children, Sigurdr and Líneik, who dwelt in their bower, night and day.

Not a long time after all this, when the queen had taken in hand the government of the realm, in company with her husband, the king's courtiers began, in a strange way, to vanish, one by one, nobody knowing what became of them. But the king paid no heed to this, further than that he took new courtiers in place of the lost ones.

One day, the queen went to the king, saying that it was already time for him to go and gather the taxes of his lands. "Go, and do this," she said, "and meanwhile I will take the lead of the government." The king was rather amazed at this, but said nothing, as he scarcely dared do aught but obey his queen, who had by this time become harsh and hard to deal with.

The king fitted out a fleet, of some few ships only, and was very sad in his mind.

When he was alboun, he went to his children's bower, and greeted them, and was heartily welcomed by them. He sighed heavily and said: "If it should so happen that I do not return from this journey, I fear you will have little safety here, and I would that you should take secretly to flight as soon as you despair of my ever returning home. You shall go eastward till you come to a great and steep mountain, up which you must try to climb; and when you are over it, you will see a long arm of the sea. At the end of this bay stand two trees, one green and the other red; they are both hollow within, in such a wise that no one can see the opening from outside. You shall then get, each of you, into one of the trees, and so nothing will ever hurt you."

After this, the king said farewell to his children, hoisted sail, and sailed away out of the country. But when he had sailed for a while, such a hurricane arose, that nothing could save the ships from being wrecked; and with the hurricane there were such wondrous thunders and lightnings that none had ever seen the like; and, to make short the tale, the king and all his men found their death in the waves, and all the ships sank.

The same night, Sigurdr, the king's son, had a dream, in which his father came all wet into the bower, and took off his crown and laid it at Sigurdr's feet, and then silently departed. Sigurdr told Líneik his sister, the dream, and they felt sure of what fate their father had met with, and busked forthwith for departure, taking all their precious things and clothes with them, but no guide.

Then they went out of the town, disguised and took the way their father had pointed out. But when they had reached the foot of the mountain, they looked back, and lo! there was their step-mother coming after them with great strides, and looking hideously trollish.

Skirting the foot of the mountain where they now were, was a forest which they had just come through, and they hit upon the plan of setting fire to it, so that, when Blávör approached it, it was all in flames.

Thus far, therefore, and no farther could Blávör manage to get, this being a bar between her and the flying children, who now continued to scale the mountain, with great difficulty, and reached the top. Once over this, they at last found the trees which their father had spoken of to them, and took up their abode in the hollow trunks, which were so contrived, that they could see one another, and talk together for their pleasure.

And now the story turns, for a while, to other doings.

At this time, Greece was governed by a great and mighty king, whose name, however, is not mentioned.

He also had two children by his queen, neither of whose names have come down to us. These children were both fair of look and accomplished beyond all of their age.

When the king's son was of age, he went out seafaring, to acquire honour and wealth. He led a viking life through the summer, but in the winter remained at home in Greece.

On his expedition, he often heard the name of Líneik, mentioned, and that she was above all other women, in beauty and virtues. He therefore at once made up his mind to sail away for the purpose of wooing Líneik.

When he came to the shore, Blávör's magic knowledge told her who was come thither, and wherefore he was come. She therefore dressed herself and her daughter in the most brilliant and rich attire, and walked to the shore, in order to meet the king's son.

He greeted them right courteously, and asked them of everyone's health. The queen told him, with a show of great sorrow, that her husband had been lost, with all his followers, when he had gone to gather the taxes of his lands. All this she told him, with a mightily sad and cast down air,

Then the prince asked for Líneik. The queen answered that the lady by her side, was none other.

But the prince, instead of bursting out into praises of her beauty, said that he had imagined Líneik to be far lovelier than this damsel.

The queen answered, that it was no wonder, for she had been quite otherwise formerly, and had waxed pale and sad-looking, from sorrow at losing her father and brother at once.

This the prince thought true enough, and forthwith wooed Laufey, and easily got the queen's consent to their marriage, for both mother and daughter approved well of his suit. Now the king's son made ready, in all haste, to go back to his own country, taking with him his bride, whom he thought to be Líneik. The queen would go with him, but to this the prince would by no means yield, and he must needs have his will.

When he had sailed but a short way from the shore, he lost his course in a fog, and knew not whither the ships were driving, till he came into a long and broad firth. He launched a boat into the sea, and went ashore. At the end of the bay, he saw standing two trees, whose like in beauty he had never seen before. He had these trees felled and brought on board his vessel, and when this work was done, the fog had cleared away. And he at once hoisted sails, and made for Greece.

He took his affianced bride home to the city and bade every mark of honour to be shewn to her. He gave her his own bed-chamber to live in by day, but at night she retired to her bower.

Now the prince was so delighted with the beauty of the trees, that he had one set up at the head, and the other at the foot of his bed. This done, folk began to look for the wedding-feast.

The prince gave Laufey, whom he took for Líneik, stuffs to make three suits of clothes for him, one blue, the other red, and the third green, with the command to her to have them all ready before the time of the wedding-feast came. First she was to do the blue suit, then the red, and lastly the green: "For," said the prince, "I am going to wear them on our wedding-day." Laufey took the stuff, and the prince left the room.

Now Laufey fell to weeping grievously, for old Blávör had not taught her much in the way of needlework, and she had never in her life set her hand to work so fine as this which she was now called upon to do. She thought it pretty sure that the prince would shew her the door, in disgust and scorn, if she did not get through her task, and even, perhaps, take her life away. All these thoughts gave her great pain and grief.

The king's children, Sigurdr and Líneik, were sitting all this while, in their trees, and saw all that passed in the prince's bed-chamber, and heard Laufey's lamentations. They so touched Sigurdr, that he called to his sister, and said :—

> " Líneik, Líneik, little sister ;
>   Laufey weepeth bitterly.
> Mend hem and border, to assist her,
>   If thou canst work better than she."

Líneik answered :—

> " Dost thou not, brother, call to mind
> Yon mountain towering higher and higher,
> And how there roared and raved, behind,
> The mighty force of fire ?"

But Sigurdr so managed to prevail upon Líneik, that she slipped out from her tree and began sewing with Laufey. Thus they finished the first suit of the prince's clothes, and Laufey was mighty glad to see how neatly and highly they were finished. Líneik stepped into her tree again, and Laufey gave the clothes to the prince.

When he saw them he said : " Never saw I clothes so fine and so well finished as these are. Begin now making the red clothes, and make them the better, the costlier the stuff is." Laufey went again to the room and sat down weeping, until Sigurdr, the king's son, called out to his sister, in the same words as before, saying :—

> " Líneik, Líneik, little sister ;
>   Laufey weepeth bitterly.
> Mend hem and border, to assist her,
>   If thou canst work better than she."

And Líneik answered :—

"Dost thou not, brother, call to mind
Yon mountain towering higher and higher,
And how there roared and raved, behind,
The mighty force of fire?"

At last, however, she came out from her tree, as before, and began sewing. Now she made these clothes far handsomer than the first suit; they were all broidered with gold and jewels, and when they were quite finished, Líneik gave them to Laufey, in order that she should take them to the prince, but she herself returned to her tree.

Laufey went to the prince, and shewed him the clothes. He looked at them and said: "Far too well are these clothes made for it to be likely that you have made them alone; methinks that more folk have handled them than I ken of. Go now, and make the third suit, and have it ready within three nights; this last suit you must have so highly finished, that it be to the others what gold is to brass. I shall wear them on the day of our wedding."

Laufey went to the room, and sat down and wept. Sigurdr, pitying her much, spoke to his sister as he had formerly done, and, after a while, Líneik stepped out from the tree, and began sewing as before, and this time she loaded the clothes with beautiful handiwork and embroidery, so as to leave scarce a place in the cloth, that was not covered with gold or gems.

The third day, as Líneik and Laufey were sewing their hardest, they were all of a sudden startled by seeing the prince, unlooked for, open the door and hurry in.

Líneik was most alarmed of the two, and was going to rush into her tree, when the prince caught her by her robe, and holding her at his side, said: "I have long suspected a trick in this game; tell me your name."

Líneik told him truly, as also of what family she was.

Then the prince looked to Laufey in great anger, and said she deserved to he tortured to death with the dreadest of tortures for her slyness and falsehoods. Laufey knelt at the prince's feet, and, asking his pardon, said: "I have used no other craft towards you, prince, than to conceal from you the maker of the clothes, and that I did, because Líneik bade me strictly to do so. And remember that I have never pretended to be Líneik, the king's daughter; the only one who has deceived you is the queen, who is called my mother."

As they were thus talking, Sigurdr, the king's son, stepped out from his tree, and there was a meeting of great joy between them all. And, in short, the Prince of Greece wooed Líneik, who said she would be betrothed to none, until her step-mother was got rid of.

Now Laufey had a tale to tell about Queen Blávör: She was the foulest of trolls, and had governed the island where she was when the minister came and found her; she had lived in a cave on the island, in company with a lot of other hideous trolls. "But I am," said Laufey, "a king's daughter, from this neighbourhood. Blávör stole me away and said she would kill me, if I did not confess all her words to be true, and I chose to promise her this, instead of losing my life. She called me her daughter, in order to make it look more likely that she was a queen. Blávör has caused the death of your father, Sigurdr and Líneik! it was she, too, who caused the great loss of his courtiers, for she used, as trolls' wont is, to seize them during the night and eat them. And her plan is to destroy every man in your country, and then to people it with her trollish pack."

Now the two princes gathered, in all haste, people together, and fitted out an expedition.

Nothing is told of their journey, till they came to the town over which Blávör now held sway. They appeared quite unlooked for, and met with but few of the townspeople, as Blávör had killed the greatest part of them, and others had fled away from her trollish rule.

Blávör had little means of defence, and was, therefore, soon made prisoner. Then her face took a grim and threatening look, but they stoned her to death, and afterwards gave her body to the flames.

After this they returned home to Greece, and a grand wedding-feast was held, and many nobles and great folk were bidden.

At this feast, Sigurdr wooed the Greek king's daughter, who at once agreed to the union, and thus two wedding-feasts were held at one time. After the feasts, the guests were sped on their ways with good gifts and farewells. Sigurdr now took the crown of his bride's kingdom, and the prince of Greece, that of Líneik's inheritance; and all rejoiced that the king's offspring was again in power where Blávör had disturbed the succession. Laufey went with Líneik, and married into a princely family, and was, afterwards, her father's heiress, he having meanwhile died of sorrow for her loss.

All these kings governed ever afterwards their realms, in peace and good luck: and so end we our tale.

SIGURDR THE KING'S SON.

THERE were once a king and queen, who ruled over a country, and who had four daughters, all of them hopeful and fair; but the yougest of them was most the darling of her father. One day, the king went a hunting with his men, and they had not ridden long before they met a hind. They pursued the animal a good part of the day, and, at last, all the men were left behind, but the king, who had the swiftest horse. He chased the hind, until he was in the thickest part of the wood, where he entirely lost it, and with it, his way, and he rode at random through the forest, not knowing whither to go. At length, in the evening, he came to a house, the door of which he found ajar. The king entered the house, and found an open room, with meals and wine on the table. He saw there too, a bed, already made, but no sign of people; a brown-coloured dog lay on the floor. The king went out again, and found an open stable, big enough to take in one horse, and a crib with food enough for one. Having stabled his horse here, the king returned to the house, in order to wait till the landlord came home. But, as midnight passed without any signs of him, the king waited no longer, and, having refreshed himself from the meals on the table, went forthwith to bed. He soon fell sound asleep, and did not wake till broad daylight next morning. He got up, and finding all sorts of eatables and wine on the table, refreshed himself, and then went out to look after his horse, which he found well provided with food. The brown dog was still lying on the floor. When the king had refreshed himself, he took his horse and went away. After he had ridden for a while, he came to a knoll, where he was overtaken by the brown dog, who looked snappish and wild. The dog said: "You are indeed an ungrateful king; last night I have given you shelter, and bed, and meals, and wine, and provided for your horse to boot, and yet off you go without saying one word of thanks. I am going to tear you to death, unless you will promise to give me whatever you first meet on your return home." This promise the king gave, as he preferred saving his life. The dog said he would come for the fulfilment of the vow, in three days. After that, the king went home.

Now we must tell how all the court in the palace were much concerned about the king, who did not return from the chase; and most of all, his youngest daughter was filled with sorrow. Next day she mounted a high tower in the palace, to look out for her father, and when she saw him approaching, she ran down into the fields, in order to be the first to welcome him. The king was very sad at his dearest daughter's being the first thing he met; but they went home together to the palace, and everybody rejoiced to see the king return in full safety. When the king had sat down to table, he told all that had happened to him, and also what vow he had been forced to make, but added that he was not in the least going to fulfil it. On the third day, there was a knock at the palace door. A servant, having been sent to the door, returned, saying that he had seen nothing but a brown dog. Now people knew what this meant, and the king's daughter wanted, by all means, to go to the door herself, but the king said that that should never be. So a servant-maid was sent to the door. As she appeared, the dog said: "Art thou sent to me?" The servant was silent, and the dog put her on his back, and ran with her into the wood. On a mound, the dog stopped, and let the servant dismount, and said: "What will the time be now, I wonder?" The maid answered that she did not know quite, but fancied it to be about the hour at which she was wont to sweep the king's palace. "Art thou then not the king's daughter?" asked the dog. "No," answered the servant, and the dog at once sprang upon her, and tore her to death.

Next day, there came again a knock at the palace door, and a man went out to see who was there. When he returned he said that he only had seen a brown and savage-looking dog. People knew what this meant, and the king's youngest daughter wanted to go out. But the king would not allow it, so another servant-maid went out. When she appeared at the door, the dog asked: "Art thou sent to me?" and making her sit on his back, ran off with her into the forest, until he came to the mound. Here he made her dismount, and said: "What will the time be now, I wonder?" The maid said she thought it was about the hour at which she was wont to get the king's table ready. "Art thou then not the king's daughter?" asked the dog. "No," answered the servant, and he fell upon her and tore her at once to death.

Next day, a third knock came to the door of the palace, and the man who went out, brought the news that it was once more the dog, who looked even fiercer than he had yet seen him. The king's daughter would go out, but the king forbade her, although she said that she should love nothing more than to save his life: and she went out, in spite of all the king's commands. When she was outside the door, where the dog lay, he said: "Art thou sent to me?" "Yes," she answered. So he made her sit on his back and went off with her. When he had reached the mound in the forest, he shook off his charge, and said: "What will the time be now, I wonder?" She answered: "I guess it is about the time at which I am wont to go in to my father's palace." "Then you are the king's daughter," said the dog. "I am," she replied. Now the dog made her sit on his back again, and carried her along till they came to a house, into which the dog took her, telling her that she was to dwell there. In the room were a table, a chair, and a bed, and all things she wanted, to make her comfortable. She should have alone, the management and full disposition of everything round her, the dog said. Now time passed away, and she never saw a human being, save, every night, a man, who slept in her bed. Morning and evening, the dog was to be seen, but in the day-time, he was often away. After a while, the king's daughter was with child, and the dog once told her, that her child should be taken from her, as soon as she was delivered of it. "But you must try," said he, "to avoid shedding a tear, as that is of great importance to me; if, however, you should shed tears, you must let them fall into this cloth;" and, with these words, he gave her a silken cloth, and walked off. Soon the princess gave birth to a child, a little girl of great beauty. She bathed and swaddled the baby, and then put it close to her in the bed, kneeling over it, with a tender mother's love and warm prayers. While she knelt thus over her child, there passed a shadow across the window of the house, and in a moment afterwards a vulture came in, and seizing up the child in its claws, flew away with it. The king's daughter was deeply grieved at her loss, but did not weep. After this, the dog, who was called Mori, (being brown,) came to her and looked mild and friendly. He brought her a golden comb, and told her that she should have it for her steadfastness and courage. Again, a long time passed, till, one day, Mori came to the king's daughter, and said that a prince had come to her father, in order to marry one of her sisters, and he asked her, as the wedding-day was drawing near, if she would like to be present at her sister's marriage, which she said she gladly would.

Now the dog took her, and brought her to the mound in the forest, where he had been wont, heretofore, to rest himself, as we have said, and shewed her the way thence, home to her father's palace. He gave her two splendid state-dresses, one for herself, and the other to give her sister, who should wear it on the day of honour. When they parted, he prayed her to say nought about her way of life, and to be no longer away than three days; after which time she should come again to the mound.

Now the king's daughter came home to the palace, and was received with great delight and rejoicing. She was present at her sister's marriage, and gave her the beautiful dress, which was greatly admired by everyone.

In spite of all enquiry, she told nothing of her way of life, save that she was well and happy.

On the third day she returned to the mound, where the dog was waiting for her and brought her home from the mound to the house.

Now, after some while, the king's daughter was, for the second time, with child. The dog Mori came to her and said: "You must try, with all your strength, to shed no tears, for much depends for me thereupon. Keep, however, the cloth at hand, in case you should weep, for the pang at the child's loss will come more sharply home to you than at the first time."

He then went away. The king's daughter gave birth to a female-child, of great beauty. She bathed it, wrapped it up in swaddling-clothes, and laid it at her side in the bed, and knelt down over it, in all a tender mother's love and warmth of prayer. Soon, she saw a dark cloud pass across the window, and knew what she had to expect. She therefore turned her from the baby towards the wall, as she had no strength to bear the sight of her child stolen away from her. The vulture came in through the window, and catching the child in his claws, flew away with it. In spite of her loss and sorrow, the king's daughter did not, even yet, shed a tear. After this, the dog Mori came to her, looking very mild and friendly, and gave the princess a gold necklace, with jewels, saying that she should have this for her courage.

Time passed away, until the dog said that another prince had visited her father, in order to marry her second sister. She might, he said, go to the wedding, if she would; and that she would gladly. He gave her fine state-attire for her sister and for herself; accompanied her to the mound, and told her not to be more than three days away, nor to divulge aught concerning her way of life

The king's daughter now came home to the palace, and was welcomed as heartily as ever. She gave her sister the fine clothes, and stayed over the marriage; but, of her life, she only told that she was well and happy. On the third day, she returned to the mound, where Mori waited for her, and took her and brought her home to the house.

After some while, the king's daughter was with child, for the third time, and when the hour of her deliverance was at hand, the dog Mori came, and told her that the child to whom she was about to give birth, would be taken away from her, like the others. He begged her, as before, to avoid weeping, as much as lay in her power; but, if she should not be able to restrain herself,—as the loss of this child would come more painfully home to her than the loss of the other two,—to take great care to shed every tear into the cloth he had given her, as upon this much depended for him.

Now the king's daughter was delivered of a comely male-child. Having bathed her son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him by her side in the bed, she knelt over the child, in all a tender mother's love and warmth of prayer. But soon, a shadow moved across the window, and she at once turned away from the child and held the cloth before her face. Then the same vulture as before, came in, and seizing the child in its claws, flew away with it. From the eye of the princess there fell one tear, into a corner of the cloth, and she at once tied that corner into a knot. After this, Mori came to her, looking rather sad, and said that somewhat had now befallen, for which he grieved. He gave her a mirror, bordered with gold, which, he said, she should have for her constancy.

Some time after this, he told her that yet another prince had come to her father, in order to marry her third sister. He gave her two precious state-dresses, one for herself and the other for her sister, with leave to go to her sister's marriage, whereof she was glad. He went with her as far as the mound, and begged her to tell nothing about her life, and to return in three days. She went home and was received heartily by the kinsfolk. She gave her sister one of the beautiful dresses, but in the other she clad herself. She stayed there three days, and told nothing of her life, save that she was well and happy. On her leaving, her mother accompanied her, and asked her very closely after her way of life. But all the princess told her was that a man slept with her every night, whom she had never yet seen.

The queen then gave her a stone, telling her to hold it over the man's face while he slept, by which means she would be able to behold him. After this, they parted, and when the king's daughter came to the mound, there was Mori waiting, who took her home with him. Next night, when her bed-fellow had fallen asleep, she held over him the stone, and saw that he was young and very fair of look; but, by ill-chance, just as she was gazing at his beauty, he awoke, and was greatly grieved when he saw what she had done. He told her that this was the greatest of mishaps, as they would now be forced to part, perchance for ever. He told her too, that he was a king's son, by name Sigurdr; his father had lost his wife, and fallen into deep grief at his loss. But once it had chanced that he had gone with his father into the forest for their pleasure, and there they found a silken tent, in which two ladies were sitting, one young, but the other elderly and of sad look: both were handsome, and his father had questioned them about their life. The elder had answered that she was the wife of a certain king, and that this was her daughter. Enemies, she said, had invaded her husband's realm, who had fallen in battle, while she had fled with her daughter away from the country, and had at last arrived here. "Their condition," the youth continued, "called forth my father's pity, and he bade them to his palace, and, soon after, married the elder lady. I felt always an unavoidable dislike for my step-mother, and the more she wished me to marry her daughter, the less I felt inclined towards her. At this time, my father went on an expedition, in order to claim the taxes from his lands; then came my step-mother to me, and pressed me, with fresh earnestness, to marry her daughter, but I gave her, once for all, a decided refusal. Hereupon, she waxed fearfully wroth, and laid magic spells upon me, so that I vanished into the forest, and have been compelled to wear a dog's shape by day, taking my own again by night. This spell should remain in force for ten years, at the end of which time, I should return home and marry her daughter, willing or no, since I would not do so freely, at first,—unless, meanwhile, some king's daughter of wondrous virtue should become my wife, and bear me three children, without ever seeing me, or knowing who I was, or trying to run away from me; but all her children were to be cruelly taken from her, directly after their birth, and if she shed tears thereat, those tears should be so many clouds on her children's eyes, which nothing could remove but the very tears themselves. I found myself," he continued, "then, in this house, and, by this time, I had only one month to remain under this fearful spell, but now I must return to my father's court, and undergo the worst fate of all, marriage with my step-mother's daughter; and there is no way whereby you can save me from this strait, however much you may yearn to do so."

He, however, went on to tell her, that he had three uncles, who, for his sake, had forfeited their homes, wealth and honours, and two of whom had taken up their abode in poor huts in his neighbourhood, in order to escape from his step-mother, and also to aid him; for it was they who had provided him with everything he had for his living and pleasure, while under this heavy curse.

"That one," he said, "who lives nearest to me, was no other than the hind that enticed your father into the thicket, once on a time. My uncles are the only men, of whom I know, able to help you in these straits. Go from the house, along the brook that runs by, and, after a while, you will find the hut of one of my uncles. Take care now, I entreat you, of the cloth, into which fell your tear, and never part with it; neither shall you part with the precious things which I have given you, save compelled by great need."

After this, he gave her a large purse of gold, praying her to be liberal in rewarding his uncles' services, if she should meet with them and receive aid from them, for they were very poor.

Then he vanished, but she remained behind, alone in the house, in deep grief. She now prepared herself for leaving the house, and walked along the brook, till in the evening, she came to a cottage, outside the door of which stood an old man, poorly clad, with a slouch-brimmed hat on his head. She greeted him, but he received her greeting mighty coldly. She asked for a night's shelter, but he said that he was, in no way, fond of guests, and, as to her, she would, he was sure, bring small luck into the house. But she begged and entreated him, and put into his hand a goodly portion of her gold, whereat his brows were somewhat lightened, and he consented to house the king's daughter; so she stayed there through the night. Now, she stated to the old man her whole case, and asked him for his help, that she might once again be joined to the prince. This, the man said, was so full of difficulties, that he was not the man to help her through them. That would be the task of his brother, who lived at a great distance from him, under this same spur of the mountain; and he offered to shew her the way thither.

Next morning, as she left the hut, the old man told her how to keep by the mountain-slope, in order that she might reach his brother's hut. In the evening she came to a cottage, at the door of which she knocked. There came out an old man, with an ugly face and fearful mien; he was dressed in a black tunic, and had a hat on his head, with a mighty broad brim. The king's daughter prayed him to give her shelter for the night; but, said he, it would scarcely be a gain to anyone to house her, as surely she did not look as if she brought good luck with her. But she begged him for a night's shelter, and gave him unstinted gold from her purse, so that he waxed somewhat milder, and asked her to step in. There, on the dais, was a woman sitting, with a child in swaddling-clothes on her lap, and two other children played on the floor. This woman received the king's daughter kindly, bade her sit down, and was courteous to her. In their talk they chanced upon the matter of the children, and the old woman said, when the princess had admired them greatly, that it was a pity that the boy in her arms should have a cloud upon his eyes, and she grieved that she had no cure for it. The princess thought this sad indeed, as the boy was so comely. When the good-wife would go down to get ready some meals for her guest, she dropped the matter, and gave the boy to the princess; who, when she was alone with the child, bethought her, all at once, that perchance her tear might heal other clouded eyes than those of her own lost child; and, undoing the knot in the cloth, into which the tear had fallen, she placed it on the eye of the child, and the cloud at once passed away from before it. When the woman came in, and saw what had happened, she was exceeding glad, and thanked the king's daughter much for her good deed.

After this, meals were brought in to the princess, and she stayed there through the night. She repeated to the old man all the tale of her troubles and mischances. He listened to her with much pity, and told her that, much as he grieved for her and shared her sorrow, he found the difficulties, in the way of helping her, great indeed, and the time short, inasmuch as the prince would hold his wedding-feast the next day, and marry his step-mother's daughter; and, moreover, the way to him would be long, if she took the road round the mountain. He said, too, that she would certainly be too late, if she chose that road, but that there was another and a shorter path, which lay straight over the mountain, but that that was wellnigh impassable, owing to the spells and witchcraft of the queen, who would, by all means, hinder the coming of the princess.

"However," he said, "I must try to help you to get over the mountain by the shortest way." So then he went with her to the mountain, and before she began to scale it, furnished her with shoes, in whose soles were sharp iron points, in order that she might be able to mount some part of the path, which was very steep, and as slippery as glass. He also wrapped her head up in a cloth, that she might neither hear nor be bewildered by the wonders with which the queen would beset the path. At last, he warned her strongly, never to look back. At the foot of the mountain, on the other side, he said lived his friend, with whom he told her to take up her quarters during the night, and to get him to guide her to the king's court, while he himself should see that she was not recognized by the queen. Now the king's daughter bade farewell to the old man, and went on her way over the mountain, clinging closely to the rules he had given her. She never looked back, in spite of all the roaring sounds and fearful wonders she both saw and heard; and the head-cloth proved of great service to her.

In the evening, she came to the hut wherein the old man's friend lived; it was a small but neatly built cottage. She was well received, and remained there through the night. She asked her host to guide and accompany her to the king's palace, which he was the more willing to do, as he was going, so he said, thither himself, in order to be present at the wedding-feast of the king's son. When they arrived at the palace, the prince's wedding-feast was going on, in all kingly splendour. The princess went up to the door of the palace, and saw the king, the queen, the king's son, and his bride (the step-mother's daughter), gay and happy, always save the prince himself, who shewed much sadness. No one recognized the princess, not even the king's son, her lover. She stayed there all the day, looking at the folk, till in the evening, the bride and bridegroom were guided to their bed-chamber. The king's daughter was full of sorrow, and utterly despaired of her affair; but, suddenly the idea came to her, that her precious things would never be better used than now, if only to some avail.

It was night; the moon shone brightly, and the princess sat down beneath the window of the sleeping-room, and began combing her hair with the golden comb. It chanced, that the bride looked out; and catching a glance of the golden comb, glittering in the moonlight, she went down and asked the owner to exchange for her's, her golden comb. This, the king's daughter declared herself quite unwilling to do. Then the bride wanted to buy it, as it was more befitting for a princess than for a cottage lass. The king's daughter declared herself unwilling to sell it. Then the bride asked if there was nothing for which she would part with it: the other answered that she would give it up only on condition that she might sleep with the prince that night; and this they, at last, agreed upon.

The bride gave the king's son a sleep-draught, and, having so done, left him, and let in the princess, who tried in vain, all night long, to wake him. She repeated to him, in loud lamentations, her love and misfortunes, but nothing could move him, till, in the morning, the bride herself came, and having ordered the princess to be off at once, roused him again.

This same day, the king's daughter was even more sorrowful than before, but remained, nevertheless, in the palace, without being known.

When the bride and bridegroom had gone to their room in the evening, she made another attempt to allure the bride, choosing, this time, her beautiful necklace, as a bait for her. Their bargaining finished just as it did the last time, and the king's daughter failed, as before, in her attempts at waking the bridegroom, for the prince remained asleep the whole night through. She bewailed her lot, and mourned loudly over her misfortune, when she was forced to leave her beloved chosen one, in the morning, as dead-asleep as he had been in the night.

But the bride, as soon as she came in, woke him easily, and he got up, and they went to the palace, where the princess saw, to her deep grief, the loving demeanour of the king's son to his bride.

This same day, it chanced that one of the prince's three uncles, of whom we have before spoken, went on the sly, up to the prince, and had a secret talk with him. This uncle of his lived in the palace, and it so happened, that his bed-room was next that of the prince.

He asked the prince: "Who is that lady, who watches over you every night, in tears and sorrowful bewailings? It is a thing that seems strange to me, and not void of some wondrous mystery."

The prince answered that he knew of no woman there, besides his own wife.

The other asked: "Why is this woman so full of grief and sorrow?"

That, the prince said, he did not know, for he was, all the night, asleep.

The other asked, furthermore; "Why is it that you sleep so soundly all night. Is it, perchance," he continued, "because your wife gives you any drink at eventide?"

The king's son said that, in truth, she did so.

His uncle then went on to say: "Let that drink, be spilt into your clothes to-night, and make believe to fall asleep thereafter, in order to see if you can find any clue to this mystery."

So that day passed away, till evening, and mighty long it seemed to the mournful princess, who tried, much as her sorrow cast her down, to keep up her courage, fixing her last hopes in her last precious thing.

When the prince and princess had retired to their bedroom, she took, once more, her stand at the window, holding her mirror in her hand. The bride, as she was wont, was attracted by the glittering gold, and agreed with the king's daughter upon the bargain, that she should, for the glass, be with the prince that night.

Now the bride gave the prince his sleep-draught, and he made as if he drank it, whereas he let it all fall into his clothes. After this, he made believe to drop to sleep. The princess now entered the bed, and strove to awake her lover, as before, but still he made as if he were fast asleep. She then recounted to her sleeping lover all her griefs, and sorrows, and sufferings on his account, and bewailed herself loudly. She entreated him to awake, to remember their former life, and their union, and to listen at last to her, who was here broken-hearted with her despairing search for him. At last she said: "All the precious things you gave me I have parted with, in order only to get an interview with you, that you might recognize me, unfortunate and forsaken as I am."

Owing to the step-mother's magic spells, it was as if the prince dreamt all this, and yet was awake; but, at last the trance broke, and he came to himself, and what was his delight to recognize and remember his love, the king's daughter. The first thing that he did, was to give her all the consolation and comfort that he possibly could, and he told her that now they had gained the victory, and that their ill-luck was all over. In the morning, when the bride came, the prince prayed the princess to go to his uncle's room, hard by, while he himself made belief to be asleep.

In the morning, when the bride came, she drove the king's daughter away, and roused the prince, and they went to the palace together. This day, as the greatest bustle and joy reigned in the palace, and everybody was drinking, the king and queen being on one throne, the prince and his bride on another, three men were seen entering the palace. They were the king's three brothers. One of them carried two female children on one of his arms; with the other hand he led a woman, who carried one child; while the other two brothers had each a round piece of wood in his hand, and all of them stepped before the prince's throne. He who led the woman said to the prince: "Do you not recognize this lady and the three children who are with her?"

The prince replied that he did so.

Hereupon his step-mother and her daughter were suddenly changed, and swelled out into trollish size, and would have spoken, when the king's brothers stuffed the blocks of wood into their mouths, and sixteen folk, whom they had hidden under the tables, rushed forth at once, and seized those two ladies, eight to each, and bound them with cords and chains.

At first, the king was mightily startled hereat, but when he saw of what race the dames were, he rejoiced at the turn things had taken, and congratulated heartily his son and the princess, his former bride.

Then the prince's father-in-law and mother-in-law were sent for, and in great joy the marriage of the prince and princess was celebrated without delay, after that the trolls had been put to death as they deserved.

Soon after, the king died, and his son was made king in his stead over all the realm the other had ruled over. He and his queen were wise and well-loved rulers, and were unfeignedly fond, one of the other, all their lives. The new king made his uncles all earls of different parts of his realm, and they proved brisk and wise rulers too, strengthening the king's sway, and keeping his friendship until death.

And this is the end of the story of Sigurdr, the King's Son.

Sigurdr, the Son of the King, and his Sister Ingibjörg.

As wont is oftentimes, there was once a king who governed a kingdom. He had a queen, and by her two children, a son named Sigurdr, and a daughter hight Ingibjörg. When the children were well grown, but before they were of age, their mother died; and the king, who had loved her deeply and tenderly, was so stricken with sorrow and sadness, that he quite forgot himself, and spent the most of his time at his queen's tomb.

But, when things had gone on thus for a long time, the king's council explained to him that he must bestir himself, somehow or other, in order to get rid of his grief; and the councillors were of opinion that this could be best brought about by his marrying another wife, the which might be done, either by himself in person, or by a sending. They laid open, furthermore, to the king, that the whole administration was going astray, on account of his overwhelming grief. This, they said, must be remedied, sooner or later. The king saw that this was perfectly true, and agreed to send his ambassadors to woo him a wife, and fitted up a vessel for them, and sent them away.

When they were off, and had sailed for some while, they were driven out of their course by storms and fog, so that they knew nought of whither they went, and, at last they thought best to let the wind carry them whithersoever it would. At length, they came to a land they knew not, and the commanders of the vessel went up on shore to look at the country, and left the ships in charge of their men. They saw no signs of the dwellings of any living human beings, and thought that the land was not inhabited, until they, at last, saw before them a hut, of poor look. They walked up to the hut, to see if anyone was forthcoming there. They found a woman, somewhat elderly, but of decent appearance. She asked them who they were, and whence they came. They gave her ready answers, and explained to her all the purpose of their voyage. Then they were told by her, at what country they had touched, albeit this tale tells not its name. She made them understand how sorry she was, that they had come, after long trouble and trial, to a country, wherein no hope could be entertained of their being able to meet with the object of their search.

Now it so happened that this all came to pass late in the day, and that a gale had arisen, so that the king's men asked the queen, (she was a queen, this dame,) for lodgings through the night.

At first she seemed so shocked at this, as to refuse flatly their request, saying that folk, used to the splendour of royal palaces, could certainly not put up with her hovel-like lodgings for the night. But, when the request had been repeated several times, she yielded in the end, and led them to their rooms.

Here, the king's men were not a little astonished to find themselves in apartments far more kingly than peasant-like. After a little while, the supper-table was loaded with all sorts of delicacies, right well befitting a royal table. While at table, the ambassador chanced to ask if the lady abode there all alone.

She answered: "Nearly so; save that my daughter lives with me, to make my loneliness more pleasant."

The king's folk wanted to see her daughter, and after much unwillingness and nay-saying, she complied, and brought her into the room. When they saw the maiden, they stood as if changed to stones, with astonishment at her wondrous beauty, and deemed it a matter of course, that the king would find her fit for his court, if they took her back with them. They therefore, at once engaged her to be their sovereign's wife. The old woman answered their speeches, as if they were joking, or making game of her.

"It would be likely indeed," she said, "that his majesty should be pleased to marry a poor old man's daughter. Nay! far better for such cottage-offsprings not to mount to so high a place, where they might be sure, after a while,—even at their highest,—to be stripped of their honour, and covered with shame and scorn, for their ignorance and vulgarity which would without fail shew itself in due time."

But, the more eloquently she refused, the more eagerly the king's men, as if prompted by magic spells, urged their prayers; and when the woman saw that they so did, in true and in real earnest, she at last promised to give the king her daughter. She also allowed her to go with them, on condition that if the king would not care for her, they should bring her back again. To this they pledged their word, and slept here through the night. Next morning, the men prayed the mother to let her daughter go with them to the vessel. To this she made no hindrance, when they had borne her goods and chattels on board the ship. Then she shewed them all the baggage, and every hand of the crew was needed for carrying it on board, so much had the young maiden of clothes and precious things. When this was done, all the folk walked down to the shore. On the way, the mother and daughter continued always in deep conversation. Nobody knew whereof they talked, but one of the men heard these words from the mother: "I shall send you the stone."

As they came to the beach, the old woman said that she was going no farther, and, kissing her daughter, bade her God-speed.

After this, they weighed anchor, and sped with full sails and fair wind, homewards, and, in a short time afterwards, came to their own country, not far from the capital.

As soon as the king heard of the return of his messengers, he went to meet them with a splendid escort, and welcomed them heartily. He waxed glad indeed when he saw how handsome a bride they had brought back for him; for she was, in his eyes, far more beautiful and far more accomplished and courteous, than any woman upon whom his glances had yet fallen.

Now the king returned, with all the escort, to the palace, and a joyful feast was held anon, in honour of the men returned, and shortly afterwards the king married the beautiful young maiden, and loved her much. Not long after this marriage to his new queen, the king must needs go into another kingdom, in order to settle some important political question. He had his vessels fitted out for this expedition, and, as he expected to be for a long while away, prayed his queen most earnestly, to take good care of his children, and to be a good mother to them, while he was away. She answered that this would be her greatest pleasure. And after this, when a fair wind sprang up, he sailed away, and henceforth, for a while, is out of our tale.

Now must we turn to the new queen. One day, in fine weather, she went to the king's children, Sigurdr and Ingibjörg, and prayed them to have a pleasant walk with her, on the sea-shore. But, suspecting their stepmother of no good intentions towards them, the children would not take this walk with her. She made as if she were hurt at this, and said that she had surely a high claim to their obedience in this matter, even though they would not yield it willingly. Now, the children did not dare to refuse going with her, any longer. After this, they all three, the queen and her stepchildren, walked down to the sea, and along the beach, for a while, till they came to what looked like a stone, unlike all the other stones upon the beach around it. At this stone, the queen halted, and said: "Open thee!"

Then the stone yawned, and into the gaping rift the queen thrust both the children, closed it, and rolled all into the sea. Hereupon, the queen returned to the city, and henceforth, for a while, is out of our tale.

So now we follow the king's children. They felt that the stone moved on, for a good long time, at great speed, until at last it stood quite still. Sigurdr supposing the stone to have found a place on dry land, thought best to do as the queen had done, and cried: "Open thee!" At once the stone opened itself, and the children found themselves on the shore of an unknown country. They stepped out from the stone, and went over the land, which they deemed deserted and without dwellings, without even the lowliest of huts. They therefore built a little house, large enough for them both, to dwell in.

When at home, Sigurdr had been wont to hunt, and, before they took that deadly walk with their stepmother, had provided himself, on the sly, with a shooting weapon, a knife and a flute, which things proved now very useful in their present strait. Sigurdr shot birds and wild beasts for their food, and succeeded well. But there being no fire, whereupon to cook and roast their meals, embarrassed them greatly, for they had no means of obtaining it.

Once, Sigurdr chanced to go into the country, in chase of the birds and beasts he hunted, and, as it fell out, went farther than it had been his wont to go, at any time before.

All at once he saw a small farm, and went thither, but could find no living human being, nor yet any beast of the quick. So he climbed up to the chimney-pot and looked down into the house, in order to see if he could be any wiser from a glimpse of the inside, since the outside was so utterly barren of information Then he saw an old woman standing astride over the hearth, and shovelling the ashes from the hearthstone between her legs to some place behind her. This work she performed dirtily indeed, and was herself clumsily big, and ugly even to hideousness. But there was one thing of which Sigurdr thought himself sure, from the way in which she moved and behaved, namely, that she must be sightless. He therefore determined to steal quietly in, and to see if he could not get a lump of living ember from her. He did so, and managed perfectly, for the old hag observed him not. Sigurdr was convinced too that she was alone in the hovel. He now went off, carrying the fire, and came to his sister, who was truly glad to see him again after his so unwontedly long absence. He gave the fire to his sister, and asked her, by all means, to take good care of it, and not to let it die out. But, like other princesses, she was unwont to keep a smouldering fire alive. It, therefore, always went out every night, and every day Sigurdr must needs fetch a fresh supply, getting it by the same trick as before. Sometimes, when he came to the hovel on these jobs, he would hear the old woman muttering to herself these words: "Slow in coming are the accursed childlings!"

Sigurdr thought that this must be an allusion to him and to his sister, as they had been conveyed hither in such a mysterious and magic way. He was, therefore, always much afraid of the old hag, and held his very breath whenever he fetched his fire from her kitchen. But the greatest nuisance of all to him was this,—that his sister was for ever begging him to allow her to go with him when he fetched the fire, for he knew her to be so light-minded, that she would giggle at everything out of the common way; but, on the other hand, he could refuse her nothing which he had the power of granting her. And, at last, he gave her leave to go with him, having got her promise that she would not titter, whatever she might see or hear, as their lives hung upon it.

Now they both went off, and, when they came to the cottage, crept up to the chimney-pot, as Sigurdr was always wont to do before he went in. All this went on nicely enough. But when they looked down into the kitchen, the monstrous hag was in her old posture, straddling over the troll-big hearth, shovelling the ashes from the hearthstone between her legs, and heaping some of them upon a spot behind her, but by far the greatest part of them upon herself, so that she looked as if she had been rolling herself in the cinders.

This was too much for the king's daughter, who forthwith burst out, on the top of the chimney-pot, into roars of laughter. When the troll heard this, she said: "Ha, ha! There they are then, at last, the accursed childlings!"

And, lifting herself up, she ran out, and was so swift-footed, that the children could not escape from her, in spite of their running with all their might; the king's daughter caused also some delay by her laughter, for she found the old woman's way of walking so wondrous funny, that she could not contain herself. After some pursuit, she caught both children and thrust them into a small cellar, which proved to be her hog-sty, where she tied them tight, each to a pillar. She gave them plenty of good food, but, in spite of this, they found their life a dreary one, especially as the sty was gloomy, stinking, and filthy. To the discomfort of this place was added the fear that the children felt at the old hag's coming every day and biting their fingers, always saying afterwards: "No, they are not fat enough yet!"

They did all in their power to get loose, but to no avail, until Sigurdr managed to gnaw through the rope round one of his hands, after which he took forth his knife and cut both their bonds. Then they took two of the old hag's hogs, and killed them, and skinned them, and dressed in their hides. Next morning, the old dame let out the swine, counting them as usual, and among them passed the king's children, who, as soon as they had got out of the reach of the troll's hands, flung off the skins, and saw, to their great delight, how she grovelled about the sty for them, when she got no answer from them to her questions. Then Ingibjörg burst again into roars of laughter, and the two at once ran off, when they saw that she came striding after them. They came soon to a rift, over which they could leap, but the old woman, coming in a rage to the edge of the rift, chanced to put one of her feet far out over the brink, and losing her balance, fell headlong in, and broke her neck. Thus she lost her life, to the sorrow of few folk indeed, and least of all to that of these ill-treated children.

When the children saw this, they were fain enough, as they could now live, undisturbed by the old hag. The only thing that annoyed them was being obliged to remain the only two people in this desert land. They therefore amused themselves in every way, and with this view, Sigurdr was wont to play his flute when he was not out hunting.

Once, it happened that the children saw vessels approaching from the main. They drew nearer, and passed at but a little distance from the shore. Sigurdr played with all his might upon his flute. Then the vessels changed their course, and made towards the beach. Hereat the children were very glad, and Sigurdr played on his flute, yet more gaily than before. One of the vessels came close up to the shore, the other keeping watch farther out at sea. On board the nearest vessel was the king, the children's father, who disembarked, and went ashore with some of his men. No sooner had he landed than he was recognized by his children, and they by him. They ran towards him, wild with joy, and flung themselves upon his neck; but he was, as it were, turned to stone with wonder at finding his children on this desert island. None of the king's men had been willing to come towards this country, in the belief that it was haunted by all sorts of monsters. The sound of the flute they deemed to be that of murderous sirens, raised to draw the king and his vessels into some yawning whirlpool. Therefore, the king's vessel alone came close to the land, as he would by all means see it for himself; and lucky it was that he had done so, as he found his children there.

Now he was returning from the voyage whereof we have spoken before.

The king asked his children by what means they had come hither. They told him truthfully all they knew about the matter, and how they had got on since their arrival here. The king then took the children on board his vessel, and forbade every one of his men to allude at all to what had happened. He sailed away, and coming home to his own country, chose a port and landed.

As he came home, the queen went to meet him, so full of joy and love! The king received her caresses and loving speeches with strange coolness, and asked wherefore his children had forgotten to come out to meet him, as had always, heretofore, been their wont. The queen fell a-sobbing, and said she had a sad tale to tell: "There came into this land a plague, and it attacked the children, who, in spite of all my efforts and those of others, fell under the deadly disease."

Nobody dared to bear witness against the queen, for she had prepared everything so well that none could gainsay her. The king made believe to be much grieved at this news, but those who knew him saw that his sorrow was by no means in earnest. On his asking whether the children had been already buried, she answered, half in tears: "Yes."

He then wished to go at once to their tombs, but the queen shewed herself against this plan, as much as she could, and said that his doing so would only serve to deepen his grief and regret. She made herself as loving as ever she was able, and her speech became quite a flow of blandishments and caresses. But the king's resolution was firm: he would see the tombs of his children, before he went home to the palace. Everybody pitied the poor weeping queen, and blamed the king for his heartlessness in not yielding to her loving entreaties. At last, the tombs were shewn to the king. When he came thereto, all he could do was to say how he admired the tombstones, but weep he could not, the which he declared he found odd enough. After this he went home with his escort, and the queen made a joyful welcome-feast for her husband. For some time henceforth the king went away every day to those tombs of his children, and declared he wondered more and more that he could not weep over their loss. This he said often to the queen.

At last, he ordered the bodies of his children to be dug up, that he might see them in their coffins. Against this, the queen set herself with all the affectionate persuasion in her power. But it availed not. The king persisted firmly in his idea, and had his orders carried out. When dug up, the coffins looked fine enough, and the king commanded them to be opened. But the queen again tried, ever so much, to dissuade him from this, saying that it would only be a new wound and source of grief to him, to see his children's dead bodies, after so long a time. But, the more she dissuaded him, the more earnestly he ordered the coffins to be opened, and his commands were, of course, obeyed at last.

Now the coffins were opened, and lo! a whelp was in each of them.

"There is trickery in this game," said the king, "and that I knew before."

So he ordered the queen to be put to death. She forthwith confessed all her misdoings, and prayed to be spared, as she had only a few more days to live. The king, contrary to the redes of his advisers, gave the queen a respite, after which she soon fell into a sickness that proved deadly to her. But, before she died, she wished, as a last service to her, that Sigurdr should keep watch over her, so long as she was unburied.

When the queen was dead, Sigurdr, the king's son, was to watch over her. But, at the king's court, was a man, old, wise in many hidden things, and skilled in magic, whose name was Bangsemon. He said that it was unadvisable to let Sigurdr keep watch over the dead body of the queen; wherefore he begged to undertake, himself, that task for the prince. This was received with everybody's approval, for the public suspicion had fallen upon the queen, of being a troll.

The first night, when the old man opened the door of the room where the corpse was lying, it said, without moving lip or limb : "Are my feet pale?"

He answered : "Yea, as straw, Masse-haggy!"

"Let us then come and wrestle;" and, at once, she sprung to her legs and attacked the old man, who stood firm, without either moving or retreating from her. And thus she wrestled, but could not fell the man. She then said that she was sure this was not Sigurdr, and that she had been deceived. She begged therefore the old man to let Sigurdr watch over her, the next night, and the old man answered, that it might perchance be so.

But, the next morning, he told the people what had happened, and offered to watch, every night over the body, an offer which was accepted with thanks and promises of reward. But the queen was, in truth, not dead, having feigned to be so, by the aid of her magic spells, and this the old man, in his wisdom, knew well.

Now the queen, knowing how everything stood, thought it safest to get out of the way. Wherefore she ran off from her bier, and into the next kingdom, and took the shape of a child, and dwelt in the wood where that king was most wont to hunt. Soon the king found this beautiful little girl, and took her home with him, and she became, ere long, the pet and darling of the king and queen. But old Bangsemon watched the queen's movements, and arrived in this kingdom, as soon as she herself. He was not over kind to her, moreover; for, when she asked him for somewhat to eat, he mostly made her go to a cask, whereinto were thrown the remnants from the king's tables, such as the skin and fins of dried fish, and the like things, and these she had to eat: and when she was thirsty, he made her swallow common water. Nor did she dare to eat much in the palace for fear she might expose herself by her mighty gluttony.

She therefore turned to old Bangsemon, whom she did not know, and who had become, at this court, overseer of all the remnants and sweepings. But this demeanour of his towards her made her so wroth, that she contrived, at last, to have him slandered to the king, and condemned to be burnt on a pile. On the way to the blazing pile, old Bangsemon asked leave to tell the story of his life. But the king refused to grant his wish, as it would only waste time. Then the carl said: "Look back to your city, king, and give not all your heed to my death."

The king turned round, and saw that the town was all in flames, and hastened back thither with all the people who were with him, and Bangsemon among them. Then it came out that the king's darling had kindled the fire, and old Bangsemon managed to have her brought before the king, in order to tell him the story of her life. Then the child was thrown on to the flames, but, at the same moment, she clutched at the queen's breast, and tore a large piece of flesh out. Over this deed, this troll had been brooding for a long time, in order to kill the queen, and by this to become queen in her stead. But now it was too late, for Bangsemon gave all his aid in thrusting her into the flames. So fiendish was this Masse-haggy, that she would not burn properly, but all of her that remained unburnt, old Bangsemon took care to destroy; and never has this troll-queen worked mischief anywhere since her pile-fare.

And more of this tale we know not.

THE STORY OF SURTLA IN BLUELAND ISLES.

THERE were once a king and queen, who had a son by name Sigurdr, and a daughter by name Ingibjörg. At the time of which this tale tells, these children were yet young, but well on their legs.

Now it so happened that the queen fell ill, and having a foreboding that this illness would be her last, called to her her children, and gave her daughter Ingibjörg a belt, saying: "The nature of this belt is, that you will never feel hungry while you have it round your waist." To Sigurdr she gave a knife, saying: "This knife will cut, with equal ease, steel and stone, and everything you wish it to cut."

After this, she bade a last farewell to her children, bestowing on them, at the same time, her blessing. Then the queen died, to the great grief of all the people in the land, but to the greatest sorrow of the king and his children. She was buried, and a fine tomb was raised over her, and the king was wont to sit there, the greatest part of the day, ever bewailing his fate and heavy loss.

One day, as he was sitting at the tomb of his beloved wife, there came up to him a man and a woman, the latter dressed in splendid attire, and of a serious look of face. They greeted the king courteously; he returned their greeting, and asked them their names. The woman said that her name was Godrún, but that of the man Raudr, and he was her brother. They then asked the king what he was doing there all alone. He told them all that had happened to him. Godrún said he would do best to leave off grieving; she had had the same misfortune, some time ago, that of losing her husband, who had been a king, but she soon found that wailing was no good rede in such a case. The king at once saw that this lady had much wit in her, and was of a quiet turn of mind, and fancied that it would be a delightful ending to his present sadness, if he were to marry her. He therefore determined at once to woo her, and the determination was very speedily carried out; but the lady said that, in such an important question, she must have her brother Raudr's advice. Raudr, in his place, told her that the best thing she could possibly do was to consent to wed the king. So the king then married her, and, in honour of this happy event, made Raudr his prime-minister.

Sigurdr and Ingibjörg liked not much this act of their father's: they did not go to his wedding, and, least of all did they like their step-mother.

Not long after this, the king fitted out an expedition, and went, himself, with it, in order to claim the taxes of his kingdom. When the children knew this, they asked their father's leave to go with him, and he had wellnigh given it them, when queen Godrún, finding this out, sped off to the king, and declared to him that he could by no means take the children on such a journey, least of all, Ingibjörg; for taking Sigurdr with him, he might find some excuses, but none whatever for taking his daughter. At last it came about that the king allowed neither of his children to go with him, but took Raudr, his minister, in their stead. When the king was ready, the queen and the children saw him off, going down with him to the shore. As the vessel sailed away, the queen and the children gazed after it, and when it was out of sight, the queen proposed to the children to mount on to a tongue of land that stretched into the sea, not far from them, as thence they could see the ship somewhat longer. This they did, and when the vessel was quite out of sight, they went down again to the beach, and walked along by the sea, till they came to a little creek. Here they found a great stone coffer, standing open. The queen bade them look into the chest; but it was both broad and high, and the children thought they saw gold glittering at the bottom of it. While the children were leaning over the edge of the chest, gazing into it, all of a sudden, she tilted them up, and tumbling them into the coffer, shut down the lid, saying:

" Sail to Blueland isles away
To sister Surtla, without delay."

The chest sped off at once, and the children felt that it sailed at a mighty pace. On the way, they used the belt in turns, in order that they might not die from hunger. At last the chest stood still. Thereupon Sigurdr began cutting with his knife into its side, and contrived to pierce a hole through, and then he saw that the chest was standing on a flat beach, beneath some sheer cliffs. He now made the hole so large that he could get out through it, but, as yet, it was too small for his sister Ingibjörg, as her shoulders were broader than his. So Sigurdr left his sister in the chest, while he went forth to see if he could get round the rocks, and recognize the country. He walked for a long while, till he found that he could climb up to the top of the rocks, where he saw a large cave, and a she-troll in it. She was rocking herself backwards and forwards towards the surf, and groped about with one hand after the other in the spray, muttering to herself, that soon would come the king's children, whom Godrún her sister, had promised her.

She sat on the floor, stretching her legs, one on each side of the hearth, and had the handle of the pot hung over her neck, and, between her legs, the pot itself, in which she was cooking meat over the fire. Sigurdr further saw that the troll was blind, and went therefore into the cave, and stealing up to the pot took out of it some of the boiling pieces of meat; but, when he saw that he fished up from the pot both human flesh and mutton, he quickly dropped the former, and took the mutton, and brought it to his sister, and with a good appetite they took their meals, for they were, in truth, in need of food.

Ingibjörg asked Sigurdr where he had got the meat. He answered that this he might not tell her. Upon this, she entreated him, all the more, to tell her, and at last he yielded, and told her all about it, on condition that she would ask him no more about this matter: and this she promised him. But, no sooner had he told her all about the troll and her odd ways, than Ingibjörg set upon Sigurdr, her brother, with new and urgent entreaties, that he would let her go with him to see the troll in this wondrous awkward posture. But he knew that his sister was over fond of laughing, and refused her this, saying she would be sure to burst out giggling. She promised Sigurdr that she would not even betray a smile, if he only would do this for her, and satisfy her curiosity at once. Sigurdr, at last, granted this, and, having widened the hole in the side of the chest, let her out, and forthwith walked with her to the cave where Surtla was sitting, in the same posture as the day before, grumbling and mumbling over the delayed arrival of the king's children. As soon as the brother and sister had come to the loophole of the cave, and seen the troll, Ingibjörg burst out into roars of laughter, and at the same moment, the troll jumped up, and flying out from the cave, cried that never could it be doubted that her sister Godrún would have remembered her. She managed, somehow, to catch the children, and then put them into a cellar-cave, which she shut up carefully, that they should not get out ; and, in truth, after all her work at the door, there was no chance of their escaping.

Here, the troll intended to cram them for a while, before she slaughtered them, wherefore she gave them meals, both good and in good quantity, through a hole in the door ; but she bade them, every day, to stretch their little fingers out through the hole in the door, and bit them, in order to know how fat they got.

But Sigurdr made with his knife, slips from the legs of mutton they were given to eat, and put them on the tops of their fingers, and when the troll bit them, she used to say : "Slow to fatten."

Then Sigurdr thought to himself that the time would most assuredly come, when the troll found it too costly a game to cram them in this way, and when she would take them, when they least thought of it, and slaughter them, and boil them for her breakfast, or dinner. He therefore began cutting away the rocks of the roof of the cave, in order to pierce a hole there, as an outlet for himself and his sister. And from time to time, he loosened from the roof large pieces of rock, and when these fell to the ground, the troll would come to the hole in the door, and roar to them, saying :

"What the devil are you doing now ?"

But they would answer:

"We were breaking, foster-mother, the bones of the mutton you gave us."

Surtla found these answers all well, and imagined no danger in the noises and thumpings she heard in the cave.

At last, the children managed to pierce a hole through the roof, and to get up out of it. While they were struggling through the hole, the foster-mother fancied that there was a mighty noise going on in the cellar. She therefore went into it, and groping about with her hands, chanced just to draw the tips of her fingers, in passing them about the roof, across the toes of Ingibjörg's feet, which were just vanishing up through the hole. Hereupon, she waxed awfully wild, and rushed forth after the children, guided by the sounds of their flying steps. The children ran as near the edge of the rocks as they well could, and at one place, where the surf dashed from the main against the cliffs, they rolled down a large stone into the sea. The stone made a mighty splash when it fell into the water, and the children moved aside a little, and held their breath, in order to make their pursuer believe that they had fallen over the edge of the rocks.

The troll, on her side, hearing the splash, thought that they had flung themselves down from the cliffs, and so killed themselves, and that she should thus have them dead, for a good meal, as she had not managed to get them living for it. So she stepped over the brink, where she had heard the splash, but it was higher, and the bottom rougher than she had fancied, as underneath lay at a dizzy depth, heaps of broken rocks. Upon these her body was smashed to pieces in the fall. The king's children rejoiced at being thus saved, and, the troll being dead, went back into her cave, which they explored, finding in it many provisions heaped up, and very many precious things; and, in another cellar-cave, they found a young damsel, in the very jaws of death, from hunger and wretchedness. She was sitting on a chair, with a plate on her knees filled with all sorts of dainties, but her feet were plunged in ice-water, up to the knees, and her hands tied behind the chair, her hair being also fastened in tight knots to it. Sigurdr at once undid her bonds. She was so faint that she could scarcely speak. She told them, however, that her name was Hildr, that she was a king's daughter, and that Raudr, the brother of the two sisters, had stolen her hither, and tried in every way to force her to marry him; but as she had firmly refused to do so, they had inflicted these pangs and tortures upon her. Now the king's children refreshed her, and they dwelt in the cave for some time. Every day, they used to go and look out for vessels, if perchance any might happen to go by. Having waited long for the much wished-for sight, they had at last the delight of seeing a vessel approaching; and, at once, they made a large pile, and put fire to it, that it might be seen from the vessel.

Now it so happened, luckily, that the king, the father of the children, was on board this vessel, and seeing the fire, he concluded that it must shew the whereabouts of some folk in distress, and ordered a boat to be launched into the sea. Raudr, the king's adviser, told him that this was an unwise act of his, as he well knew that no human dwellings were to be found on these islands, and that nobody had ever returned thence who had landed on them. But the king's determination prevailed, and the boat was launched, and the king stepping into it with some of his men, was rowed to shore. When he landed, you may fancy his joy and astonishment at finding his children there. They told him all that had befallen them, how their step-mother had acted towards them, and how they had got on after their parting with her; and also the story of Hildr.

The king took his children and Hildr, all of them, into the boat, and covered them with a red cloth, so that nobody should see anything of them; and thus went again on board the vessel, and managed to get the children into a secret room in the ship without the knowledge of Raudr, to whom the king said calmly that all had gone on as he had foretold; there had been nothing to see worthy of note. And now the king sailed homewards.

Now we must turn to Queen Godrún. The day she accompanied the king to the sea, when he left on his expedition, she returned home late at night. She told the folk of the court that she had met with savage beasts in the wood, who had killed the royal children, she being scarcely able herself to escape with her life, having first snatched from the beasts the children's torn and trampled bodies, which she had clad in shrouds and prepared for burial. She got the best coffin-maker to make their coffins as beautifully as possible, as she was anxious to have the children buried with all kingly splendour, in spite of things having taken this sad turn. The coffins were made, all inlaid with gold and silver, and never had coffins so splendid been seen before. The queen claimed to herself alone the sad duty of putting the bodies into their coffins, without anybody's witnessing the proceedings, and afterwards they were buried right royally.

Time passed until the return of the king. Then the queen went down to the shore, very sorrowful. The king greeted her with all marks of love, asking what was the matter with her.

She answered: "I have a long tale, and a sad one too, to tell."

And then she told him all that had happened, and added that she was only too glad that the children had received a burial truly befitting kingly offspring, as the whole of the folk in the capital would be able to bear her out.

The king made believe to be grieved at this story, but claimed to see the children. From this, however, Godrún did all in her power to turn the king, saying that it would be but little comfort to him, as their bodies must now be all decayed and disfigured. But the king, as soon as he came home, had the coffins dug up, and saw that they had been beautifully made in every respect. After this he had them opened, and lo! in one was a dog, and in the other a bitch, wrapped up in splendid winding-sheets and grave-clothes.

Betraying not a little wonder at this strange sight, he said: "O! are these my children?"

Godrún and Raudr grew somewhat dark in the face; she having no answer to give. After a pause, the king said to the queen: "No! I will shew you my children, somewhat otherwise looking, as I hope you will find." And at once he had his children and Hildr brought from his vessel, to tell their tale in the presence of the whole town. Raudr and Godrún were changed, as the tale went on, into their trollish shapes, and the king was forced to order many men against them before they could be fettered. After that, they were fastened by strong cords to unbroken horses, which, in wild flight, ran away with them over hedge and ditch, and tore them limb from limb.

Sigurdr, the king's son, now married Hildr, and became king after his father; his sister Ingibjörg married a neighbouring prince, and hereby ends this story.

THE STORY OF HRÍNGR.

ONCE there were a king and queen who ruled over their realm. They had a son, Hríngr, and a daughter, hight Ingibjörg. Hríngr was a greater faint-heart than noblemen were in those days, and without skill in any arts.

When he was twelve years old, he rode into the forest with his men, to amuse himself. They rode long, till they met with a hind, round whose horns was a golden ring. The prince would have the hind at any cost. They rode after it, everyone of them, till every horse was killed, the prince's being last. At this time, it came suddenly over with a thick mist, just as they were all far from any human dwelling, and would return home, for they were getting uncertain about the way. However, they went on all together, till they began disputing about the road, each one deeming his to be the right one, and, at last, they parted one from the other, going all in different directions.

Now, of the king's son we must tell, that he had lost his way like the others, and wandered astray, not knowing where he was, till he came into an open place in the forest, near the sea. Here he found a woman sitting on a chair, and a large barrel standing beside her. The prince went up to the woman, and greeted her, and was courteously welcomed by her. After a while, he chanced to look into the barrel, and at the bottom of it saw a beautiful gold ring lying. He at once coveted greatly the ring, and could not keep his eyes away from the charms of it. When the woman saw his unmistakable desire for the ring, she said : "O! you like it, I guess!"

"Yes ; of course I do," was the answer.

Then said she : "If you will take the trouble to stoop over the brim for it, and take it up, it is yours."

He thanked her much, saying she would find that small payment indeed. So he began stretching himself over the brim, for the ring, and as he was grappling after it, in the barrel that seemed so shallow, the treacherous bottom sunk away the more, the more the prince stretched himself after the gold. As he was half over the brim, the old woman came and tilted him over, into the barrel, saying that there he should lodge; and putting the lid on to the cask, rolled it into the sea.

The prince passed his time in bewailing his ill-luck. He found that the barrel left the shore and tossed for a long time in the waves, but he knew not for how long, as he was in utter darkness. At last he felt it bumping against something hard, like a rock. Thinking it likely that this might be land, or some out-stretching cliff in the sea, he became a little more easy in his mind, and plucking up spirit, thought of trying to kick off the lid of the hated barrel, albeit he was but little of a swimmer. Although he feared that the landing might be a bad one, he made up his mind to try this, and having succeeded, found himself on some low, flat rocks, stretching slopingly into the sea, while, up on the land, they were bordered by great cliffs. He therefore went along the foot of these sheer rocks for a long time, till at last he found a place where he thought he might try to climb up, and contrived to scramble to the top of the cliffs. When he was there, he soon found that this was an island, all covered with forests, the soil being fertile, and there being plenty of apples, some of which he began to eat, thinking this a nice enough retreat, as things went.

When he had been there for some days, he heard a noise in the wood, drawing nearer and nearer to him. He was very much afraid, and ran away through the wood, in order to hide himself. He now saw that a mighty giant approached him, dragging a sledge loaded with wood. He had no other chance than fling himself flat on the ground, where he stood. When the giant came to the spot, he looked at this pigmy on the ground, and took him up, and brought him away under his arm, to his home, and was very kind to him. He gave the boy, as he called him, to his wife, an old woman, who was almost unable, from age and infirmity, to turn in her bed, and said: "Look! This child I found in the wood. You can use it to wait on you in your helpless state."

The old woman was very glad, and began patting and caressing the child, with many blandishments and mild words. Now he remained here with the old couple, obedient and yielding to them, in everything they asked him, and they waxed kinder to him every day.

One day, the giant took him and shewed him all his stores, except what was in the kitchen. This aroused the prince's curiosity, for he fancied that some precious things must be hidden there. One day, when the giant had gone into the forest, the prince went to try to open the cooking-hall, and managed to put the door ajar.

He then saw that some great brute moved, and came running, shaking itself, towards the door, muttering some words. The prince, in a panic, fell back from the door, wetting his nether-clothes from sheer fright. When his fear had calmed down a little, he picked up his courage afresh, and went to the door, for he was curious to find out what the beast would do. But this trial came to the same end as the first one. He was now really angry with himself for his faintheartedness, and tried again to throw it off. And, for the third time, he stood in the door long enough to see that this wonderful monster was a dog, covered with a thick, dirty, matted hair, who came to him, and spoke, in plaintive voice, these words only: "Choose me! Hríngr, king's son!"

The prince rushed off quickly, and said to himself: "No great gems to be had here." However, what he had heard at the kitchen door grew fixed in his memory. It is not told how long he dwelt with the giant, on the island, but one day the man came to him and said: "I will now take thee from my island to the mainland, for I have only a short time yet to live. I have to thank thee for good service rendered to me. Choose therefore anything thou likest from my house; for, whatever thou mayest covet, it shall be thine."

Hríngr thanked him much, saying he deserved no reward at all for his slight services; but, as the giant was so kind as to offer him such choice, he said he should like what was in the kitchen. The giant was startled at this unexpected choice, and said: "Ah, friend, there thou choosest my giant-wife's right hand. But, it is the same, I must not break my promise."

He then fetched the dog, and when the beast came, wagging himself in delight, and rushing towards the prince, he was so frightened that he knew not what to do with himself, in order that it might not be seen that he was afraid. After this the giant went down to the sea, together with the prince and the dog. There he embarked, in a stone-boat no bigger than would just hold the three,—the giant, the prince, and the dog. When they had got to the shore of the mainland, the giant bade a friendly farewell to the prince, saying that he should have whatever things of value he found on the island, after his death. For this purpose the prince should come, after a fortnight, for then the giant and his wife would be no more. The prince thanked him both for this kindness of his, and for all the past ones. The giant returned homewards, and the prince wandered somewhat up from the sea, into the new land, which he did not in the least know. He dared not speak to the dog, and after he had walked silently for a good while the dog broke the silence, saying: "Surely you are not curious, as you have not asked my name."

The prince then thought it best to try to pick up some courage, so said: "Well! what is your name then?" The dog answered: "It is best for you to call me Snati-Snati. We are now in a certain kingdom. You shall ask the king to give you a place at his court for the winter, and a small room for us both."

The prince, on arriving at the court, applied to the king for a winter stay there, to which the king gave a gracious answer.

When the king's men saw the dog, they began to make game of the prince, and seemed likely enough to tease his dog. But he said to them: "I should advise you, once for all, not to tease this dog; it may be that you get no good from it."

They thought this perhaps true, as the dog seemed ready to do anything.

Now Hríngr got a room for himself, as the dog had advised him on the way. When the prince had been here for some days, the king began to like him much, and shewed him greater attention than to any other of his men. The king's minister, by name Raudr, seeing the king's esteem for the prince, was seized with a deep jealousy of Hríngr.

One day, this adviser came to the king, and said he did not understand how it was that he was so charmed with this newly-arrived man, who had, however, shewn no more accomplishments, in any way, than other people. Raudr asked the king, furthermore, to let him and this pet of his go both the next day into the forest to cut wood, and see which of the two would do the most work. Snati, hearing this, told it to Hríngr, and bade him ask the king for two axes, that he might still have one, in case the other should break. The next morning, the king bade Hríngr and Raudr to go into the forest for wood-cutting. They obeyed willingly, Hríngr having two axes. Each went to his own place for the task. When Hríngr was in the forest, Snati took one of the axes and cut away with the prince, the whole day through. In the evening, the king came to look over their work, and finding the wood-pile of Hríngr more than double the size of Raudr's, said: "Just as I expected; no, Hríngr is no good-for-nothing, for I never before saw so much work done in one day."

For this, Hríngr rose yet higher in the king's esteem than he had been before, which Raudr beheld with great pain and hatred. One day, the latter came to the king and said: "As this Hríngr is such a wonderful fellow, I think, sire, you had better ask him to kill the wild bulls that haunt the forest, and flay them all in one day, and deliver into your hands the same evening their skins and horns."

The king answered: "Do you not find it a dangerous sending, as they are murderous beasts, and nobody has yet been found who had courage to go against them."

Raudr answered: "Why, he has only one life to loose. The chance is a great one for proving his stout-heartedness, and you will have yet more cause to worship him if he does this task like a man."

The king at last yielded to Raudr's worryings, although it was greatly against his will. And one day he bade Hríngr to go and kill for him these bulls, and bring him their hides and horns in the evening. Hríngr, not knowing how dangerous these bulls were to meddle with, declared himself willing to the task, and went off at once. Now Raudr was glad, for he was sure that this would prove a deadly undertaking for Hríngr. When Hríngr was within view of the bulls, they came towards him, roaring in mad fury. One was fearfully large, the other somewhat smaller.

Hríngr was deadly afraid. Then said Snati: "How do you like the sight of them?"

"I need not tell you," said Hríngr, "that I dislike it fearfully."

Snati answered: "We have no choice left but to rush against them, if we would look at all to favour from the king. I will attack the big one, but do you go against the other."

At the same moment, Snati rushed against the big bull, and, after a short while, killed him. The prince went shaking and trembling against the other, and when Snati had finished his task, the bull had just thrown the prince down. But Snati gave his master the aid he wanted. When both bulls were felled, they began flaying them, each taking one. When Snati had finished flaying the big one, the prince had scarcely half finished his.

All being at last finished, the prince found his strength too slight to carry both skins and all the horns. Snati therefore said to him: "Throw them all on my back; I will carry them home to the gates of the castle."

This offer the prince was glad to accept, and flung on the dog's back all but the skin of the smaller bull, which he managed somehow to carry staggering home to the town. At the gate, he left the whole behind him, and going into the palace, asked the king to come and see it. When they came to the spot, the prince gave the king the hides and the horns of the bulls. The king wondered at his heroic courage and power, and, saying that he knew of no man to match him, thanked him heartily for his great achievement. After this, the king gave him the place next to himself. All esteemed him highly, and deemed him the greatest of heroes, and even Raudr was forced to allow it; but in spite of this, his intention of taking the prince's life away grew stronger and stronger in his mind. Once, thinking he had hit upon a good plan, he went to the king and asked for a hearing, as he had things of great importance to speak of to him. The king asked what they were. Raudr said: "Now the remembrance of the gold-cloak, the gold-chess-board, and the light-gold, which you lost the other year, has come across my mind."

"Don't mention it," answered the king.

Raudr replied: "I wonder if you think, sire, as I do?"

"How?" answered the king.

Raudr replied: "I do think that Hríngr is a marvellous man, who succeeds in everything he undertakes. I therefore thought of advising you to bid him find out these things and bring them to you before next Yule, on the condition that he shall marry your daughter, if he finds them and brings them to you."

The king replied that he found it in every respect unworthy of himself to do this, particularly as he could not point out to the man where to go for these things. But Raudr went on persuading the king, and never paying any heed to his remonstrances, till at last the king fell into his views, and one day, a month before Christmas, called Hríngr before him and said to him: "I have a great service to ask of you." Hríngr asked what service that was. The king answered: "It is to fetch my gold-cloak, my gold-chess-board, and my light-gold, which were stolen from me the other year. If you can bring these things to me before Christmas, I will give you my daughter."

Hríngr answered: "But where am I to apply for these things?" The king replied: "That you must tell for yourself, for I am sure I know nothing about it."

Now Hríngr went away from the king in a sad mood, finding himself placed in very awkward straits on the one side, but on the other hand, being very desirous of marrying the king's daughter. Snati, seeing his master in difficulties, said to him: "Do not give up all hope as to the task the king has entrusted to you. But do one thing. Follow closely my advice, or else you will find yourself, by and by, in bad scrapes." The prince obeyed the dog, and made preparations for his journey, and these finished, went to the king and took leave of him. When he came out from the king, Snati said to him: "Now you must go round this parish and get as much salt as ever you can."

This the prince did, and got so much salt that he could by no means carry it away. Snati said: "Never mind; throw the salt-sack over my back," and so the prince did.

By this time, Christmas-day was very near at hand.

The dog ran before the prince, with his salt-bag on his back, till they stood under some huge rocks, very lofty and sheer. Snati said: "Up here must we go." "O," said the prince, "no easy task, I should fancy."

"Hold tight by my tail!" said Snati. The prince grasped tight hold of his dog's tail, and the dog jumped, with the prince on his tail, up to the first ledge in the rocks, the which made the prince very giddy. Next, the dog jumped, with the prince hanging to his tail, on to the next ledge in the rocks; that jump wellnigh made the prince swoon. The third jump of the dog, on to the uppermost ledge of the rocks, sent the prince into a fainting fit, and there he lay senseless from the awful height of the cliff. After some time, he recovered, and now they went over level fields, till they came to a cave.

By this time it was Christmas-eve.

They went up to the roof of the cave, and found there a round hole, and looking through it, saw four trolls of awful aspect lying asleep round a blazing fire, over which was a huge pot with boiling stir-about in it. "Now you shall strew all the salt into the stir-about," said Snati. This done, the trolls awoke. Of them all, the old hag was by far the most horrible. She raised herself up and, having tasted the stir-about, said: "Now it is salt; how is that? I charmed the milk to me yesterday, from four kingdoms, and now it is salt."

Nevertheless, the trolls began licking up the stir-about, and found it good, but when they had finished, the old troll was nearly dying of thirst. She then asked her daughter to go to the broad river running not far from there, to fetch water for her.

"I do not go, unless you lend me the light-gold," said she.

"Oh! strike me dead if I will!" answered the old hag.

"Die away, then," said the wench.

"Go then, you naughty hussy," said the old hag, "and take it with you, and make haste."

The wench took the gold with her, and when she came out, its splendour shone all over the fields. When she came to the river, she lay down to drink the water out of it. But Snati and the prince ran down from the cave-roof, and hurled the drinking troll into the water. Now, soon after this, the old hag began to be impatient at her daughter's delay, and said that she had surely forgotten her errand, in order to run about the field with the gold. She then said to her son: "Go and fetch me a drop of water."

"I do not go," said he, "unless you lend me the gold-cloak."

"Oh! strike me dead if I will!" answered the old mother.

"Die away, then," said the son.

"Go then, you naughty urchin," cried the old hag, "and take it with you; but make haste with the water, will you?"

He took the gold-cloak, and it shone so bright that he could see his way. When he came to the river, he began drinking, as had done his sister before. At the same moment, Snati and Hríngr ran to him, got the cloak off him, and flinging him into the river, returned to their peep-hole in the roof of the cave. Now the old troll had no peace, on account of her thirst. She said that the confounded children had, no doubt, began playing in the field with her precious things; she had guessed this before they went, although she had yielded to the plaguing of these wretches. "I am not going," said her old carl, "unless you lend me the gold-chess-board."

No! strike me dead if I will," cried the troll.

"Well," answered the carl, "I see no harm in your dying, as you will not do a little favour for me in your own service."

"Take it then, disgraceful fellow," said she, "since you are no better than the brats."

Now the old he-troll went to the river, with the gold-chess-board, and began drinking, as his children. Snati and the prince went to him, and snatching away the chess-board from him, pitched him into the water. But before they had got to their peep-hole, the ragged old carl came stalking after them, having risen from the water and death, to dry land and life. Snati rushed at once against him, as did also Hríngr, but with only half courage as was his wont, and now they managed to conquer him for the second time, after a hard struggle. But when they came to the hole, they saw that the old hag was beginning, crippled as she was, to drag herself along the floor. Then said Snati: "Now we have only the choice of going in to kill her in the cave, for if she gets out, she will be unconquerable, as she is the most hellish troll living, whom no edged weapon can cut. One of us must therefore pinch her well with red-hot iron, and the other pour boiling stir-about over her. So they went in. And when the old woman saw Snati, she said: "Ah! there you are, prince Hríngr; I guess you have put an end to my children's and husband's life." Snati, well knowing that she wanted now to lay new spells upon them, rushed towards her with the red-hot fire-irons, while the other poured boiling stir-about over her. In this way they at last managed to kill her, and after that, burnt both her and the old man to ashes. Then they ransacked the cave, finding gold and gems in heaps. The most precious things they took to the edge of the high rocks, and made all the haste they could to carry the king's treasures to him. Late on the night of Christmas-eve, Hríngr went into the palace, and gave up to the king his long-lost treasures. The king was stricken dumb with astonishment and wonder at Hríngr's marvellous skill in all arts, as also at his piercing wisdom. He now shewed him far more marks of honour than before, and betrothed his daughter to him, and fixed that very Yule-tide for their marriage. Hríngr thanked the king courteously for this and for all other kindnesses. When the prince had refreshed himself in the palace with meals and drink, Snati said to him: "Now I ask as a favour of you, that you will allow me to sleep in your bed to-night, while you sleep in my lair." The prince answered: "You are welcome to it, for you deserve far more of me than that." Snati accordingly went into the bed, and, after a short while, got down again, saying: "Go now to your own bed, but touch nothing you find in it, not even if it be something out of the common way."

Next morning, Raudr came to the king, in the palace, and shewed his right arm, handless, and said:

"Look what wondrous virtues your son-in-law that is to be, has to boast of! This he has done to me, quite sackless."

The king was furious with anger, and said he would be sure some time to find out the truth; and, if Hríngr had cut off his hand without cause, he should be hanged, but if this were not so, Raudr should die. The king then called Hríngr before him and asked him wherefore he had done this horrible deed, and cut off Raudr's hand; "For," said he, "was he not sackless?" Snati had already told Hríngr who had done this in the night, and how. The prince, therefore, begged the king to come with him, in order that he might shew him the clue to this deed. So the king went with Hríngr into his sleeping-room, and saw a hand, clasped round a sword, lying on the bed. Hríngr said: "This hand with the sword came through that hole in the panel, bent upon stabbing me in my bed; I therefore drew my sword, bound to save myself."

"Ah!" said the king, "this being the case, I blame you not for being thus forced to save your life. Raudr must, therefore, pay the penalty of death for his own rascality, he being the cause of it all."

Raudr was hanged, but the prince wedded the king's daughter. The first night he slept with his bride, Snati asked the prince to allow him to sleep at his and his wife's feet. This Hríngr granted him, and in the night awoke at hearing some strange, low, howling or screaming, in or round the bed. He therefore lighted a lamp, and lo! on the floor was lying a hideous-looking dog's skin, but at the foot of the bed there rested a handsome prince. Hríngr took the skin and burnt it. But the prince, who was yet lying in a swoon on the bed, he besprinkled till he came to himself. The bridegroom asked the other his name: he said it was Hríngr, and that he was a king's son. He had lost his mother, when yet a youth, and his father had taken a troll for his second wife, who had laid upon her step-son this curse,—that he should be a dog, and never be released from the spell, until a prince of the same name should allow him to sleep at his and his bride's feet, on their bridal night. He furthermore went on to say: "When she knew that you were my namesake, she wanted to destroy your life, that you might not release me from her spell. She was the hind which you and your companions once hunted; she was the woman you met in the open wood, with a barrel by her side; and she was the troll whom we killed a short while since, in the cave."

After the marriage feastings were over, the two namesakes went to the rocks, and brought home to the town all the precious things they had heaped up there, from the cave. They also went to the island where they had first made acquaintance, and brought home all they found of any value there. Hríngr gave his disenchanted namesake his sister Ingibjörg to wife, and his kingdom to rule over. But he himself shared half the kingdom of his father-in-law, while the latter lived, and after his death succeeded to it all.

THE STORY OF THE THREE PRINCES.

It is said that once, in the days of old, there was a good and wealthy king, who ruled over a great and powerful realm; but neither his name, nor that of his kingdom, is given, nor the latter's whereabouts in the world. He had a queen, and by her three sons, who were all fine youths and hopeful, and the king loved them well. The king had taken too, a king's daughter from a neighbouring kingdom, to foster her: she was brought up with his sons. She was of the same age as they, and the most beautiful and accomplished lady that had ever been seen in those days, and the king loved her in no way less than his own sons.

When the princess was of age, all the king's sons fell in love with her, and things even went so far, that they all of them engaged her at once, each in his own name.

Their father, being the princess's foster-father, had the right of bestowing her in marriage, as her own father was dead. But as he was fond of all his sons equally, the answer he gave them was, that he left it to the bride's own choice, to take for a husband whichever of the brothers she loved the most. On a certain day, he had the princess called up to him, and declared his will to her, telling her that she might choose for a husband, whichever she liked best of his sons. The princess answered: "Bound I am in duty to obey your words. But as to this choice of one of your sons to be my husband, I am in the greatest perplexity; for I must confess that all are equally dear to me, and I cannot choose one before the other."

When the king heard these answers of the princess, he found himself in a new embarrassment, and thought a long while what he could do that should be equally agreeable to all parties, and at last hit upon the following decision of the matter: that all his sons should, after a year's travel, return, each with a precious thing, and that he who had the finest thing should be the princess's husband. This decision the king's sons found to be a just and agreeable one, and they agreed to meet, after one year, at a certain castle in the country, whence they should go, all together, to the town, in order to lay their gifts before the princess. And now their departure from the country was arranged as well as could be.

First, the tale tells of the eldest, that he went from one land to another, and from one city to another, in search of a precious thing, but found nowhere anything that at all suited his ideas. At last the news came to his ears that there was a princess who had so fine a spy-glass, that nothing so marvellous had ever been seen or heard of before. In it one could see all over the world, every place, every city, every man, and every living being that moved on the face of the earth, and what every living thing in the world was doing. Now the prince thought that surely there could be no more precious thing at all likely to turn up for him than this telescope; he therefore went to the princess, in order to buy the spy-glass if possible. But by no means could he prevail upon the king's daughter to part with her spy-glass, till he had told her his whole story, and why he wanted it, and used all his powers of entreaty. As might be expected, he paid for it well. Having got it, he returned home glad at his luck, and hoping to wed the king's daughter.

The story next turns to the second son.

He had to struggle with the same difficulties as his elder brother. He travelled for a long while over the wide world, without finding anything at all suitable, and thus for a time he saw no chance of his wishes being fulfilled. Once he came into a very well-peopled city, and went about in search of precious things, among the merchants, but neither did he find nor even see what he wanted. He heard that there lived, a short way from the town, a dwarf, the cleverest maker of curious and cunning things. He therefore resolved to go to this dwarf, in order to try whether he could be persuaded to make him any costly thing. He got a guide to lead him to the dwarf, whom he found at home, and to whom he declared what he wanted. The dwarf said that he had ceased to make things of that sort now, and he must beg to be excused from making anything of the kind for the prince. But he said that he had a piece of cloth, made in his younger days, with which, however, he was very unwilling to part. The king's son asked the nature and use of the cloth. The dwarf answered: "On this cloth, one can go all over the world, as well through the air as on the water. Runes are on it, which must be understood by him who uses it."

Now the prince saw that a more precious thing than this could scarcely be found, and therefore asked the dwarf, by all means to let him have the cloth. And, although the dwarf would not, at first, part with his cloth at all, he, at last, hearing what would happen if the king's son did not get it, sold it to him at a mighty high price. The prince was truly glad to have got the cloth, for it was not only a cloth of great value, but also the greatest of gems in other respects, having gold seams and jewel-embroidery. After this, he returned home, hoping to get the best of his brothers in the contest for the damsel.

The youngest prince left home, last of the three brothers. First he travelled from one village to the other, in his own country, and went about, asking for precious things of every merchant he met on his way, as also on all sides, where there was the slightest hope of his getting what he wanted. But all his endeavours were in vain, and the greatest part of the year was spent in fruitless search, till at last he waxed sad in mind at his lot. At this time, he came into a well-peopled city, whereto people were gathered, from all parts of the world. He went from one merchant to another, till, at last, he came to one who sold apples. This merchant said he had an apple that was of so strange a nature, that if it was put into the arm-hole of a dying man, he would, at once, return to life. He declared that it was the property of his family, and had always been used in the family as a medicine. But, as soon as the king's son heard this, he would, by all means, have the apple, deeming that he would never be able to find a thing more acceptable to the king's daughter than this. He therefere asked the merchant to sell him the apple, and told him all the story of his search, and that his earthly welfare was based upon his being, in no way, inferior to his brothers in his choice of precious things for the princess. The merchant felt pity for the prince, when he had told him his story, so much so that he sold him the apple, and the prince returned home, glad and comforted at his happy luck.

Now nothing more is related of the three brothers, till they had met together at the place before appointed. When they were all together, each related the striking points in his travelling. All being here, the eldest brother thought that he would be the first to see the princess, and find out how she was; and therefore he took forth his spy-glass and turned it towards the city But what saw he? The beloved princess lying in her bed, in the very jaws of death! The king, his father, and all the highest nobles of the court, were standing round the bed, in the blackness of sorrow, sad in their minds, and ready to receive the last sigh of the fair princess.

When the prince saw this lamentable sight, he was grieved beyond all measure. He told his brothers what he had seen, and they were no less struck with sorrow than himself. They began bewailing loudly, saying that they would give all they had, never to have undertaken this journey, for then, at least, they would have been able to perform the last offices for the fair princess. But, in the midst of these bewailings, the second brother bethought him of his cloth, and remembered that he could get to the town on it in a moment. He told this to the brothers, and they were glad at such good and unexpected news. Now the cloth was unfolded, and they all stepped on to it, and, in a moment, it was high in the air, and in the next, inside the town. When they were there, they made all haste to reach the room of the princess, where everybody wore an air of deep sadness. They were told that the princess's every breath was her last. Then the youngest brother remembered his wonderful apple, and thought that it would never be more wanted to shew its healing power than now. He therefore went straight into the bed-room of the princess, and placed the apple under her right arm. And, at the same moment, it was as if a new breath of life flushed through the whole body of the princess; her eyes opened, and, after a little while, she began to speak to the folk around her. This, and the return of the king's sons, caused great joy at the court of the king.

Now some time went by, until the princess was fully recovered. Then a large meeting was called together, at which the brothers were bidden to shew their treasures. First, the eldest made his appearance, and shewing his spy-glass, told what a wonderful thing it was, and also how it was due to this glass that the life of the fair princess had ever been saved, as he had seen through it how matters stood in the town. He, therefore, did not doubt for a moment that his gift was the one which would secure him the fair princess.

Next, stepped forward the second brother, with the cloth. Having described its powers, he said: "I am of opinion, that my brother's having seen the princess first, would have proved of little avail, had I not had the cloth, for thereupon we came so quickly to the place, to save the princess; and I must declare that, to my mind, the cloth is the chief cause of the king's daughter's recovery."

Next, stepped forward the youngest prince, and said, as he laid his apple before the people: "Little would the glass and the cloth have availed to save the princess's life, had I not had the apple. What could we brothers have profited, in being only witnesses of the beloved damsel's death? What would this have done, but awaken our grief and regret? It is due alone to the apple, that the princess is yet alive; wherefore I find myself the most deserving of her."

Then a long discussion arose in the meeting, and the decision at last came out,—that all three things had worked equally towards the princess's recovery, as might be seen from the fact that, if one had been wanting, the others would have been worthless. It was therefore declared that, as all the gifts had equal claim to the prize, no one could decide to whom the princess should belong.

After this, the king planned another contrivance, in order to come to some end of the matter. He soon should try their skill in shooting, and he who proved to be the ablest shooter of them should have the princess. So a mark was raised, and the eldest brother stepped forward with his bow and quiver. He shot, and no little distance from the mark fell his arrow.

After that, stepped forward the second brother, and his arrow wellnigh reached the mark.

Last of all, stepped forward the third and youngest brother, and his arrow seemed to go farther than the others; but, in spite of continued search for many days, it could not be found. The king decided in this matter, that his second son should marry the princess. They were married therefore, and as the king, the father of the princess, was dead, his daughter now succeeded him, and her husband became king over his wife's inheritance. They are now out of this tale, as is also the eldest brother, who settled in life abroad.

The youngest brother stayed at home with his father, highly displeased at the decision the latter had given concerning the marriage of the princess. He was wont to wander about, every day, where he fancied his arrow had fallen, and, at last, he found it fixed in an oak in the forest, and saw that it had by far outsped the mark. He now called together witnesses to the place where the arrow was, with the intention of bringing about some justice in his case. But of this there was no chance, for the king said he could, by no means, alter his decision. At this, the king's son was so grieved, that he went wellnigh out of his wits. One day, he busked for a journey, with the full intention of never again setting foot in his country. He took with him all he possessed of fine and precious things, nobody knowing his rede, not even his father, the king.

He went into a great forest, and wandered about there many days, without knowing whither he was going, and, at last, yielding to hunger and weariness, he found himself no longer equal to travelling; he sat down under a large stone, thinking that his sad and sorrowful life would here come to a close. But after he had sat thus a while, he saw ten people, all in fine attire and bright armour, come riding towards the stone. On arriving there, they dismounted, and having greeted the king's son, begged him to go with them, and mount the spare horse they had with them, saddled and bridled in royal fashion. He accepted this offer, and mounted the horse, and after this, they rode on their way, till they came to a large city. The riders dismounted, and led the prince into the town, which was governed by a young and beautiful maiden-queen. The riders led the king's son at once to the virgin-queen, who received him with great kindness. She told him that she had heard of all the ill-luck that had befallen him, and also that he had fled from his father. "Then," quoth she, "a burning love for you was kindled in my breast, and a longing to heal your wounds. You must know that it was I who sent the ten riders, to find you out and bring you hither. I give you the chance of staying here; I offer you the rule of my whole kingdom, and I will try to sweeten your embittered life;—this is all that I am able to do."

And, although the prince was in a sad and gloomy state of mind, he saw nothing better than to accept this generous offer, and agree to the marriage with the maiden-queen. A grand feast was made ready, and they were married according to the ways of that country. And the young king took, at once, in hand the goverment, which he managed with much ability. And so time passed away.

Now, the story turns homewards, to the old king.

After the disappearance of his son, he became sad and weary of life, being as he was, sinking in age. His queen also had died, sometime since. One day, it happened that a way-faring woman came to the palace. She had much knowledge about many things, and knew how to tell many tales. The king was greatly delighted with her story-telling, and she got soon into his favour. Thus some time passed. But, in course of time, the king fell deeply in love with this woman, and, at last, married her and made her his queen, in spite of strong dissent from the court. Shortly, this new queen began meddling in the affairs of the government, and it soon turned out that she was found spoiling everything by her redes, whenever she had the chance.

Once, it happened that the queen spoke to the king, and said: "Strange indeed it seems to me, that you make no enquiry about your youngest son's running away, smaller faults being often chastised than that. You must have heard that he has become king in one of the neighbouring kingdoms, and that it is a common tale that he is going to invade your dominions with a great army, whenever he gets the wished-for opportunity, in order to avenge the injustice he thinks he has suffered in that bygone bridal question. Now I want you to be the first in throwing this danger off hand."

The king shewed little interest in the matter, and paid to his wife's chattering but slight attention; but she contrived, at length, so to speak to him, as to make him place faith in her words, and he asked her to give him good redes, that this matter might be arranged in such a way as to be least observed by other folk. The queen said: "You must send men with gifts to him, and pray him to come to you for an interview, in order to arrange certain political matters before your death, as also to strengthen your friendship with an interchange of marks of kindred. And then I will give you farther advice, as to what to do."

The king was satisfied with this, and equipped his messengers royally.

Then the messengers came before the young king, saying they were sent by his father, who wished his son to come and see him without delay. To this the young king answered well, and lost no time in busking his men and himself. But when his queen knew this, she said he would assuredly rue this journey. The king went off, however, and nothing is said of his travels, till he came to the town where his father lived. His father received him rather coolly, much to the wonder and amazement of his son.

And when he had been here a short while, his father gave him a good chiding for having run away.

"Thereby," said the old king, "you have shewn full contempt of myself, and caused me such sorrow as well-nigh brought me to the grave. Therefore, according to the law, you have deserved to die; but as you have delivered yourself up into my power, and are, on the other hand, my son, I have no mind to have you killed; but I have three tasks for you, which you must have performed within a year, on pain of death. The first is, that you shall bring me a tent which will hold one hundred men, but which can yet be hidden in the closed palm; the second, that you shall bring me water that cures all ailments; and the third, that you shall bring me hither a man, who has not his like in the whole world."

"Shew me whither," said the young king, "I shall go to obtain these things."

"That you must find out for yourself," replied the other.

Then the old king turned his back upon his son and went off. Away went also the young king, no farewells being said, and nothing is told of his travels, till he came home to his realm. He was then very sad and heavy-minded, and his queen seeing this, asked him earnestly what had befallen him, and what caused the gloom on his mind. He declared that this did not regard her. The queen answered: "I know that tasks must have been set you, which it will not prove easy to perform. But what will it avail you to sit sullen and sad, on account of such things? Behave as a man, and try if these tasks may not indeed be accomplished."

Now the king thought best to tell all that had happened to the queen, and how matters stood.

"All this," said the queen, "is the rede of your step-mother, and it would be well indeed if she could do you no more harm by it, than she has already tried to do. She has chosen such difficulties as she thought you would not easily get over, but I can do something here. The tent is in my possession,—so there is that difficulty got over. The water you have to get is a short way hence, but very hard of approach. It is in a well, and the well is in a cave hellishly dark. The well is watched by seven lions and three serpents, and from these monsters, nobody has ever returned alive; and the nature of this water is, that it has no healing power whatever, unless it be drawn when all these monsters are awake. Now *I* will risk the undertaking of drawing the water."

So the queen made herself ready to go to the cave, taking with her seven oxen, and three pigs. When she came before the cave, she ordered the oxen to be killed and thrown before the lions, and the pigs before the serpents. But while these monsters tore and devoured the carcasses, the queen stepped down into the well, and drew as much water as she wanted. And she left the cave just in time, as the beasts finished devouring their bait. After this, the queen went home to the palace, having thus got over the second trial. Then she came to her husband and said: "Now two of the tasks are done, but the third, and indeed the hardest of them, is left. Moreover, this one you must perform yourself; but I can give you some hints as to whither to go for it. I have got a half-brother who rules over an island, not far hence. He is three feet high, and has one eye in the middle of his forehead. He has a beard thirty ells long, stiff and hard as hog's-bristles. He has a dog's snout and cat's ears, and I should scarcely fancy he had his like in the whole world. When he travels, he flings himself forward on a staff of fifty ells length, with a pace as swift as a bird's flight. Once, when my father was out hunting, he was charmed by an ogress, who lived in a cave under a waterfall, and with her he begat this bugbear. The island is one-third of my father's realm, but his son finds it too small for him. My father had a ring, the greatest gem, which each of us would have, sister and brother, but I got it, wherefore he has been my enemy ever since. Now I will write him a letter and send him the ring, in the hopes that that will soften him, and turn him in our favour. You shall make ready to go to him, with a splendid suite, and when you come to his palace-door, you shall take off your crown, and creep bareheaded over the floor, up to his throne. Then you shall kiss his right foot, and give him the letter and the ring. And if he orders you to stand up, you have succeeded in your task; if not, you have failed."

So he did in everything as he was bidden by his queen, and when he appeared before the one-eyed king, he was stupified at his tremendous ugliness, and his bugbear appearance; but he plucked up courage as best he could, and gave him the letter and the ring. When the king saw the letter and the ring, his face brightened up, and he said: "Surely my sister finds herself in straits now, as she sends me this ring." And when he had read the letter, he bade the king, his brother-in-law, stand up, and declared that he was ready to comply with his sister's wish, and to go off at once without delay. He seized his staff, and started away. He stopped, now and then, for his brother-in-law and his suite, to whom he gave a good chiding for their slowness. They continued thus their march, until they came to the palace of the queen, the ugly king's sister; but when they arrived there, the one-eyed king, cried with a roaring voice to the sister, and asked her what she wished, as she had troubled him to come so far from home. She then told him all the matter as it really was, and begged him to help her husband out of the trial put before him. He said he was ready to do so, but would brook no delay.

Now both kings went off, and nought is told of their journey, till they came to the old king. The young king announced to this father his coming, and that he brought with him what he had ordered last year. He wished his father to call together a Thing, in order that he might shew openly how he had performed his tasks.

This was done, and the queen, and the king, and other great folk were assembled.

First, the tent was put forward, and nobody could find fault with it.

Secondly, the young king gave the wondrous healing water to his father; the queen was prayed to taste it, and to see if it was the right water, taken at the right time. She said that both things were as they should be.

Then said the old king: "Now the third and heaviest of all the tasks is left; come, and have it off your hands quickly."

Then the young king summoned the king with one eye. And, as he appeared on the Thing, he waxed so hideous, that all the people were struck with fright and horror, and most of all the old king. When this ugly monarch had shewn himself for a while there, he thrust his staff against the breast of the queen, and tilted her up into the air, on the top of it, and then thrust her against the ground with such force, that every bone in her body was broken. She turned at once into the most monstrous troll ever beheld.

After this, the one-eyed king rushed away from the Thing, and the people thronged round the old king, in order to help him, for he was in the very jaws of death from fright. The healing water was sprinkled on him, and refreshed him.

After the death of his queen, who was killed of course when she turned into a troll, the king confessed that all the tasks which he had given his son to perform were undeserved, and that he had acted thus, egged on by the queen. He called his son to him, and humbly begged his forgiveness for what he had done against him. He declared he would atone for it, by giving up into his hand all that kingdom, while he himself only wished to live in peace and quiet for the rest of his days. So the young king sent for his queen, and for the courtiers whom they loved the most

And, to make a long story short, they gave up their former kingdom to the king with one eye, as a reward, for his lifetime; but governed the realm of the old king to a high age, in great glee and happiness.

The Paunch.

There lived once, in their kingdom, a certain king and queen, who, of children, had one son and one daughter. The daughter was a hopeful and accomplished maiden, but their son was of a rascally turn, and quite a castaway. Time passed, and the king waxed older, but his son was tired of his father's long life, and at last formed the plan of killing his mother and father and sister, all three. He became, accordingly, king after his father, but to marry was no easy thing for him, as he was well known for his infamy. But after a long time, he at last got a wife. Of their married life nothing is told, but that they had one daughter, an only child, by name Ingibjörg. She was far above other women in fairness of look, and beauty of mien.

It is told that, when the queen once fell ill, she called her daughter, Ingibjörg, to her, and said: "I have a foreboding in my mind that I shall now die. In no way can I yield you my aid, although I earnestly wish it; but here is a belt, which you shall always wear round your waist, and while you have it on, you will need no food. Here is also a bitch, which I give you; for, when I am dead, your father will sleep with you, and tie you with a rope, but you must contrive some way by which to fasten the bitch to the rope, while you escape yourself."

Then the queen died. But, the next evening, the king bade his daughter come to his bed. She made every excuse, but he threatened to kill her, if she did not obey his command; then Ingibjörg dared use excuses no longer, but said she wanted to close the palace before she came to bed.

"That is a lie," said the king; "you only say it, in order to play me some trick."

But Ingibjörg stuck strongly to her purpose, till the king said: "I give you leave to go only on condition that I tie you to this rope." This he did accordingly. Now Ingibjörg went to the door of the palace, and contrived to tie the rope round the bitch, and then the king hauled back the bitch, while his daughter escaped from the palace.

Darkness was abroad, and through the darkness she walked, all the night. In the morning, she came to some sea-rocks, beneath which a trading vessel was riding at anchor. She asked the merchants to help her, and to bring her to some country which she named. This they promised to do. She embarked; a fair wind arose, and the vessel sailed on, to the country mentioned by Ingibjörg, and left her behind there. She walked up into the country, and came to a little cottage, where she asked for shelter, and was received. In this country there was a young king, unmarried, who lived near the cottage where Ingibjörg was. The farmer was charged with the office of keeping the king's clothes, and washing his linen. After this time, the king noticed that his clothes were better kept than before, and even so neatly, that he marvelled at the change which had come to pass in this matter.

Once, he came to the farmer's, and saw Ingibjörg there. He was struck with her beauty and accomplishments, and at last, uttered his wish of taking her to wife, to which Ingibjörg gave a courteous and bashful consent.

Hereupon, a marriage-feast was prepared, and celebrated with great honour.

Once on a time, Ingibjörg spoke to the king, and said: "One thing I beg of you, my king; do not take any winter-guest without my knowledge." This the king promised, and some years passed without aught happening out of the common way.

At last, however, there came one day an elderly man to the king, and begged to be allowed to stay with him that winter. "That I will not grant," said the other, "until I have spoken to my queen about it."

"But I was under the idea," answered the stranger, "that you had as much freedom of sway in your own kingdom, as would allow you to take one winter-guest; and indeed it cannot but be deemed undignified for a king to ask his queen's leave for so trifling a thing. I have also been once a king, and can judge competently of these things."

He spoke so long that the king granted him his winter-stay. The king told this afterwards to his queen, who waxed sorrowful, and said that he had done greatly amiss. Now the time approached when the queen should have a child, and when the hour of deliverance came on, she could not give birth to the child. The king called to him all the best doctors, but to no avail. The king then asked the advice of his winter-guest, who said he would try to help the queen, provided that no one was present while he was with her. This the king granted, and the winter-guest soon helped the queen out of her trouble. But when the child, a fine boy, was born, the winter-guest took him and threw him out of the window of the palace, and taking a whelp instead of the child, shewed it to the king, saying: "Look, this is your queen's offspring!"

In due course of time the queen gave birth to another child, and things passed exactly as before.

And, in due time, she became with child for the third time. And just now it so happened that the king got a message from king Herraudr, his brother, begging him to come to his aid with as many armed men as he could muster, for an invading army of enemies had attacked his country. The king was unwilling to go, and yet more unwilling to let the king go, was the queen. But at last he made up his mind to go and help his brother, who was in hard need for his aid; and as he left, he begged the winter-guest to take good care of his queen while he was away.

When the king had been away from the country only a short while, the queen gave birth to a fine-looking girl. But, as wont he was, the winter-guest threw the child out of the window.

Sooner than he was looked for, the king returned home to his kingdom, and was received with great joy and love by his queen, who had recovered from her last ailment. Shortly after this, the winter-guest came to the king, and gave him an ugly and disgusting-looking kitten, and said: "Here, king, you see the offspring which your queen has this time brought into the world. I do not see how it can befit your kingly dignity or your family welfare, to have so unnatural a queen."

At this the king grew sad, and heavy thoughts filled his mind. He ordered then a wooden box to be made, and into it he put the queen. Next, he had the box closed with three hoops of iron, and smeared all over with honey, and placed out in the wood, among the trees, with the queen in it. The wild beasts of the wood came and licked the honey, and as they gnawed it off the wood, one of the iron hoops snapped with a sound that scared the animals away. Soon after, the beasts came again to lick the box, and then the second hoop broke, whereat they ran off. After a little while, the beasts came again and licked the box, so that the third hoop broke with such a mighty snap, that they were frightened far away into the forest. At this, the box opened, and the queen got out, and looking about her, began wandering through the wood, and, after a long walk, came to a house, where she sat down. In a little while, out came a woman and said: "Ill has it fared with thee, Ingibjörg, king's daughter." Then she bade the queen step into the house, which offer she accepted. In the house was a bed, ready made, and the woman asked the queen to rest herself in it, who, when the woman had smeared her body with ointment, went to bed and slept soundly. When she awoke it was broad daylight, and the fair sunshine beamed through the window into the house. Then the woman said to the queen: "I cannot help you as I should wish, but you may choose for yourself, if you will, anything you see in the house." Hereupon there rolled forth a horrid monster from some hidden corner in the house, that had the likeness of no other thing in nature more than a paunch; and it said: "Choose me! Choose me! Choose me!"

"Shall I choose this?" asked the queen.

You will be none the worse for that," answered the woman, and accordingly the queen chose the paunch. But, no sooner was the choice made, than house, bed, woman, and all but the queen and Paunch at her side, vanished away before her eyes.

"Now you shall follow me, queen," said Paunch; and so saying, rolled away and rolled far, followed by the queen, till they came to a sea-shore. Then said Paunch: "Come now on my back, queen, for here I shall go over." The queen did so.

After that, Paunch rolled with the queen on its back, over the sea, till they came to an island. There stood a pen and a farm, belonging to the queen's husband, the king. They went up the country, and came to a fine house whereinto Paunch went, followed by the queen. "In this house you must now abide, queen, at first, for a while," said Paunch: "it is my own."

For some time, therefore, the queen abode there, there being abundance of every sort of thing. One day, Paunch gathered a large pile of wood, and set fire to it. The flames were seen from the king's palace, and the winter-guest said to the king: "Now are these enemies in your island, and they must be driven away." The king agreed to this, and the winter-guest made for the island in a boat. But then there arose a storm, and a heavy sea sprang up, so that he was forced to return to the same shore again. The next day Paunch gathered a pile together as before. The winter-guest would cross over to the island, but was driven back by a furious gale, as on the first day. The third day, Paunch made again a bonfire yet larger than ever, and the king himself was mightily struck at seeing it. The king therefore manned and fitted out a large vessel, and went on board it, with his winter-guest, to the island. The voyage was this time a successful one, and when they landed, Paunch came down to the shore to receive the guests. As she came down, the king's winter-guest said to her: "I dare say it is you who rob, and plunder, and ravage the king's island."

"That," answered Paunch, "we will discuss anon."

Then Paunch invited the king and his winter-guest to its house, whither they went. Paunch had a room apart in the house, into which she shewed the king and his winter-guest, offering a golden chair to the king, but to the other, one of iron, from the back of which she clasped an iron bar around his chest.

"Now king," said Paunch, "I ask as a favour of you, that you will bid this man give you the history of his life."

"That will I do," said the king.

But when the king gave him the command, he refused to obey it. At last, however, he began telling his tale, and when he had spoken for a while, Paunch cried out: "You do not tell the truth," and at the same moment tightened the bar, which was furnished with iron spikes, turned inwards towards his breast. The winter-guest then began, for the second time, his tale. When he had proceeded a while, Paunch cried out: "You are leaving out, and telling lies!" at the same time tightening the bar until the man screamed. For the third time, the winter-guest began, and told a long spell of his life, till Paunch cried: "You are both leaving out and lying!" and this time tightened the bar so close as nearly to kill the carl, who seeing that Paunch would squeeze his life out in earnest, began a true story of his life, and told it to the end. "Now truth is told," said Paunch, "do you not find, king, that this fellow has lived long enough?" "Yes," answered the king, and wept. Then Paunch drew from underneath the iron chair a slab of stone, underneath which, in the yawning hole, was a pot filled with boiling tar. Into this fell the winter-guest, and thus ended his life.

"What will you pay me, king," said Paunch, "if I can bring to you your queen and all your children?"

"I would fain do for you anything I could," answered the king.

Then Paunch summoned the queen. King and queen flew into one another's arms, shedding tears of joy and transport, and yet farther was their joy enhanced, when Paunch brought to them their three children, beautiful and blooming.

"Now king," said Paunch, "I ask you to have me married to Herraudr, your brother."

"That is a mighty hard trial," said the king; "however, I will do my best."

Now king, and queen, and children, not to forget Paunch, went home to the palace. When the king was at home, in quiet, he sent for his brother, Herraudr, and suggested the match to him; but here things were very hardly and very slowly worked out. However, after great persuasion from the king and queen, Herraudr promised to marry Paunch, whom he had not yet seen. But now she was introduced to the bridegroom, and what a shock it was for him! Nathless, he was not a man to break his word of honour. So the marriage was made ready, and the wedding-rites performed, all with great state and pomp. The bridegroom was downcast, to the last degree, but Paunch was all gaiety itself; even too much so.

Now the time came when the bride and bridegroom should go to bed, and people marked that the latter shuddered at it, with every show of disgust. However, into the same bed they went, as wont is, and passed the night. In the morning, Herraudr awoke, and lo!

at his side slept a beautiful young maiden, but on the floor lay her paunch-shape, which Herraudr lost no time in burning; and he became now as merry and cheerful as he had formerly been low-spirited and sad.

This maiden was no other than a wealthy princess, upon whom spells had been laid by her step-mother.

After this, Herraudr returned, happy, with his queen to his kingdom, and both brother-kings governed successfully their realms, all their lives, to a high age. And thus ends this story.

THE STORY OF GEIRLAUG AND GRŒDARI.

ONCE upon a time there were a king and queen, in their realms, whose names are not mentioned, but they had a son, by name Grœdari. He was young, and even a cradle-dweller, when this story begins. All that he had about him was beautifully wrought, and as an instance of this, it is said that, on his swaddle-belt was written, in letters of gold, "Grœdari, son of the king."

One day, when the weather was mild and beautiful, the king was in his garden, with the queen, and they had the cradle standing between them, and amused themselves in looking at the beauty of their little son. All of a sudden, they heard a great whirring din, which was followed by pitchy darkness. But when the darkness passed away, the cradle had vanished. They gave themselves up entirely to sobbing and sorrow, on account of their misfortune, and enjoyed neither sleep nor meals.

Now it was a dragon that had taken the cradle away.

But we must tell of other things.

In another kingdom, there ruled a king and queen, who had a young daughter, by name Geirlaug. This same day, they happened to be with their child in their garden, and the king chancing to look up to the sky, saw a dark cloud approaching through the air, and as it came nearer, it directed its course straight towards the cradle. It was the same dragon, who, carrying the other cradle in his claws, tried to seize this one also in his mouth. But the king was not idle; he drew his sword in haste, and dealt the dragon so fierce a blow in the eye, that he let the cradle drop. The married couple now saw the unhappy child whom they had rescued, and pitying him much, took him to them, and fostered him up together with their daughter. A nurse was then given to the children, and they were placed in a castle not far from the sleeping-room of the king and queen.

When they were twelve years of age, the queen died, and was bewailed by all the people, but chiefly by the children, for even Grœdari loved her with a son's love. Some time after, the king took another wife. Before very long, she conceived a hatred against the children, because they loved one another tenderly. The queen was thought to be skilled in magic, as was also the children's nurse.

Now time passed, till once the king fitted out an expedition, and went to gather the taxes from his country. He shewed great sorrow at having to leave his children, but their step-mother made a great display of love and tenderness for them. But, as soon as the king was away, she began her own course of life, and one day went to pay a visit to the children; but they had gone off too. She then called to her thirty men, and told them that she had had a dream which boded war, and as she was anxious to have everything done that might lessen her husband's trouble in the matter, she ordered them to seize all animals they met, and chiefly horses, and kill them all without fail. They obeyed her, and searched the whole day, but found nothing save two foals, such beautiful beasts, that they had no heart to kill them, but thought that they might do well as riding-horses for the king and queen. In the evening, they returned home, telling the queen nothing about this. She made a banquet for them that night, and gave them a drink, of such a nature that it made them tell the truth, whether they would or no. Then the queen waxed mad with anger, and killed them all, declaring, when she heard that they had not killed the fine foals, that they had ill-missed them, the devil's-brood! At the same time that these things took place, one courtier was missing every night, and suspicion fell upon the queen. After a while, the king came home. The queen received him with open arms, and told him her foreboding of the war spoken of above, saying that she should like him to go the next day, with thirty men, in order to kill all animals he found on his way.

Now the tale turns to Geirlaug who had known all about her step-mother's plots; she therefore had told Grœdari to leave with her the castle, and had turned herself and him into young foals. But when her father had ridden into the forest, she said: "Now comes my father himself, and I shall not let him have the trouble of searching to-day, for but a short while has he to live, since my step-mother will give him to-night a sleep-drink. Let us therefore become sweet singing-birds and perch upon these oaks."

Then they sang so sweetly, so sweetly that Geirlaug's father was drawn by the song, and said to his men: "I will rest and listen to this singing; you go on and search." In the evening the men returned, saying that they had seen nothing but the two birds, sitting in the branches of the oak. The king said: "Never will I suffer them to be killed, who have delighted me with their sweet singing all the day."

So they returned home, and were welcomed with great kindness by the queen, who made a great banquet for them, and gave them wine in unstinted draughts, and treated them to the same drink as she had given the others. They therefore told her truly all that had happened. She declared that these had been the king's children, and thereupon killed her husband, and all the men who were with him.

This Geirlaug knew, and said to Grœdari: "Now comes my step-mother herself, and she will not rest till she has tried her utmost." Grœdari asked what rede she would now take. She said: "I am going to turn myself into a whale, and you shall be a fin on me."

Now the queen raged in her trollish manner, and took out with her thirty people, in order to find the king's children; and she walked all over the country in the rain, till she declared that the children were not in the country at all. She then went to the sea, and seeing the whale, she turned into a savage fish, in order to attack it, but their contest ended in Geirlaug's killing her step-mother, the queen. After this, she was so weary, that she could move neither hand nor foot, and thus she lay for three days and nights, and afterwards began to recover. Then she said to Grœdari, who, having made her his vows of love, never left her: "If I have any magic power, I wish we could now be under your father's fence, if it be anywhere to be found in the world."

No sooner had she spoken, than they were both at the very place. Then Geirlaug said to Grœdari: "Go now home to your father's town; tie your swaddling-belt round your waist, and go to your father, and tell him the truth. But beware of drinking, however thirsty you may be, till you have spoken to your father."

Now they parted in love, and he went his way. But in passing the street that led towards the palace, he was attacked with so burning a thirst, that there was no bearing it. He then saw a silver bowl filled with water standing hard by. Without thinking, he took the bowl and drank out of it. But, no sooner had he finished drinking, than he lost all remembrance of his former life, and felt as if he had been born that very hour. Then he wandered about, till he met the queen's page, who came towards the prince, and said: "All hail, king's son!" Grœdari stood still, fancying that the lad was mocking him. The page, however, persuaded him to go with him to the queen, who, when she caught the first sight of him, knew at once her son, and flying to him, embraced him with all a mother's love. Grœdari said: "How is it that you are my mother?"

The queen answered: "Why dost thou not wish to be my son? I lost thee when thou wert half a year old, but I gain thee again, at the age of twenty."

He replied: "Neither do I know you, nor where I have been up to this time."

The queen answered: "The belt thou wearest round thy waist tells me that thou art my son, for no other bears thy name. Come with me and gladden thy father, no less than me."

So they both went to the king, who was amazed and said: "Even wert thou not bound to me by the ties of kindred, thou shalt be my son."

Now the prince lived in all sorts of pleasures and amusements, and was taught all those arts the skill in which becomes a man, and all that he had not already learned; and a rich castle was built for him. He had two pages, of whom he was so fond that they always followed him whithersoever he went, and they were as one man. And thus for a while he remained quiet at home.

Now we turn to Geirlaug.

When three hours had passed without any signs of Grœdari's returning, Geirlaug felt sure that he must have forgotten her. She determined therefore, by and by, to repay him for his folly. She walked from where she had been waiting, till she came to a farm, belonging to a rich farmer, who had two daughters. She begged the farmer to let her stay a while at his house, which he was willing enough to grant her. She had not been there long before she had educated so well the farmer's daughters, that their fame was known all over the kingdom, and also that it was due to a strange lady staying there. This was told also to Grœdari and his favourites. Now the prince deemed this a good chance, and declared that they should all three go thither, one each evening; his favourites should go to the farmer's daughters, but he himself to Lauphöfda, as Geirlaug called herself while staying at the farmer's.

Now it must be told, that when she came to the farmer, she became so fond of his daughters, and they, in their turn, so fond of her, that she prevailed upon them to make their father build a castle for them, as well fitted up as that of Grœdari's.

On the evening when the first of the prince's favourites was coming, she spoke to the second of the farmer's daughters, and bade her make up her bed and her room as splendidly as she could, for a guest might be expected to visit her that evening.

Lauphöfda had, the autumn before, brought up a male-calf, which she always fed herself. When these things came to pass, the calf had already grown greatly.

As soon as it was dark, there came a knock at the bed-room door of the second of the farmer's daughters. She went to Lauphöfda, and bade her give her some good redes, as this nasty fellow would fain go to bed with her. Lauphöfda bade her go to bed quietly, telling her what she should do besides.

When the prince's favourite was in bed, and the damsel was just stepping into it, she said: "Alas! I have quite forgotten to chain up Lauphöfda's calf. I must go down and have it done before I go to rest."

The other said he would do it for her. But she said it was very hard work to chain him up; nevertheless the man declared he would do it.

She said: "He will not be stalled, unless you take him by the tail, and twist it round your right hand, while you thrust him forward with your left."

Now out went the man, and did as she had said. But he could scarcely do much with the calf, who, being unused to this treatment, danced madly about, and in its rage burst open a door, so that both found themselves in the open air. No sooner was the calf outside, than it rushed wildly away with all its might. But the prince's favourite, finding himself now fixed to this ignoble part of the beast, began to think himself placed in a desperately awkward strait. The calf, however, regardless of the straits of his attached follower, scampered about all over the fields, waxing more furious every hour, and went on thus through the whole night, till the dawn of day. Then the youth got loose, and made for home, which he reached with but little strength left. He told nothing of all this to anybody, but made believe to be unwell.

The next favourite fared exactly in the same way.

Now came the prince's day, who said he would go that evening. The same day, Lauphöfda hinted to the maidens, her friends, that a stranger would visit her that night, and bade them go early to rest. She fitted out her room as splendidly as she could. In the evening, some one knocked at the door. When the stranger was in the room, she recognized in him her old friend Grœdari, but he did not know her. She shewed him to a seat, and said that it was no small honour for her to be visited by such guests. He said he had come, in order to be her night-guest, and she replied that he was welcome, and treated him with wine and supper. Then she went to bed, and he after her. When he had doffed all but his linen clothes, and was going to step into bed, Lauphöfda cried loudly: "Oh! the calf is unstalled, and my maidens are in bed," and was going to step out of bed herself. But he bade her by all means be quiet, as he would go and chain up the calf. She said he would not be able to do it, save by twisting the beast's tail round his right hand, and thrusting him into the stall with his left. He went out, and finding the calf, did as she had told him. But the calf behaved so savagely that the very ground was kicked up into the air. When the animal got out, he rushed about in a wild fury, with the prince fast to his tail, barefooted and nearly naked, all the night through till the dawn of day, and the weather was first snowy, and then frosty, and then there came a downpour of rain. When the prince at last got loose, he was nearer dead than alive, and kept his bed, fainting and bruised, for a whole week after this unprincely affair. But neither knew of the other's mishaps.

Sometime after this, the king bade his son engage for his wife a king's daughter in the next kingdom, by name Aslaug. To this advice the youth agreed, and the betrothal went off smoothly. When he came back to the shore of his own country, he and his bride were met by two royal carriages, in one of which Grœdari and Aslaug took their places, but his two favourites sate themselves in the other. But when Grœdari's carriage should start, it would not move, albeit the horses were beaten and lashed in a pitiless manner, and nobody knew what to do. Then the prince's favourites said one to the other: "But why do we not advise the prince to send for Lauphöfda's bull?" They spoke therefore to him about this, and he found it a capital plan. He said they should both go to her, and grant her whatever she asked for. So they went to her, and asked for the bull, and she said they were welcome to it, if she might be allowed to sit behind the bride and bridegroom on their marriage-day; this they promised should be granted to her. They brought back Lauphöfda's bull, and when they had put it to the prince's carriage and gone away to their own, the bull rushed away with the carriage in such a hurry, that it seemed as if it would be dashed into thousands of pieces, and Aslaug became mightily afraid for her life. Thus the bull rushed home to the town, and there, breaking loose from all the traces, ran away again.

Now time passed to their marriage. On the marriage-day, seats were put up for the guests, and behind the bridal party other seats for Lauphöfda and the farmer's daughters. Lauphöfda was dressed in red silk attire, with a crown on her head, but was all covered with birch-bark clothes. All admired her beauty, and asked, one the other, whence she could possibly be, and all vied in waiting on her. Now all three maidens went home to the palace and were given seats on this back-bench. Lauphöfda had a basket on her arm, and having taken her seat, she drew forth from it a cock and a hen, and put them behind Grœdari. Everyone rejoiced in the palace, save Lauphöfda; all dined, and her birds got their meal also. But when they had picked up the last grains, the cock began plucking out all the hen's feathers, until she stood quite bare, save the right wing, which was yet untouched. Then the hen cried out loudly: "Are you going to treat me, as Grœdari, the son of the king, treated Geirlaug, the king's daughter?" This the hen said in such piercing tones that Grœdari waxed sad at the words, and said: "It is a wonder, indeed, that I should ever treat my Geirlaug, whom I loved most of all things in the world, in the way I have done."

Then Geirlaug gave him a ring with his name in it, and at the same time rose up, and throwing off her birch-bark clothes, stood before the whole company in her beautiful attire. Then ensued a meeting of great joy between the two lovers, and the prince asked her pardon for the heartfelt grief he had caused her by his folly. Then they told the story of their lives to the old king, and such change was now made that Geirlaug mounted the seat of the bride, and was married to Grœdari, while the prince's favourites wedded the daughters of the farmer. All these bridal feasts were held at once, but at the end of the rejoicings, Grœdari gave to Aslaug his own dominions for her disappointment. But, with his wife, he went to her kingdom, and governed it with her till his death. And thus ends this story.

THE STORY OF HERMÓDR AND HÁDVÖR.

ONCE there were a king and queen who had a daughter, by name Hádvör. She was both fair of look, and beautiful of mien, and being an only child, was right-born to the crown. The king and queen had, too, a foster-son, by name Hermódr. He was of about the same age as Hádvör, fair of look, and accomplished in all things. Hermódr and Hádvör often played together when they were young, and such love they felt one for the other, that they vowed secretly eternal faith, even in their early youth.

Now time passed on, till the queen fell ill, and, as she felt that her illness would be deadly, she called the king to her. When he came, she said that, most likely, she had but few hours to live, wherefore she would ask one favour of him, namely, that he would promise her that, if he were ever going to marry again, he would, for her word's sake, marry no other than the queen of Hetland the Good. This the king promised, and then the queen died. But when time went on, the king, being tired of a single life, fitted out a ship, and put to sea. On this voyage, a thick fog surrounded him, so that he lost his course and became bewildered as to his whereabouts. After much ado, he found land before him, and steered his vessel thither, and entering a harbour, went ashore. When he had walked a while, a forest lay in his way. He went a short way into it, and stopped walking, for he heard strains of sweet music, and having listened, he went on again in the direction from which the sound was heard, till he came to an open lawn in the wood, whereon he saw sitting three women, one of whom was on a golden chair, in splendid attire, holding a harp in her hand, and very sad of look. The second of the ladies was younger-looking than this one; she was also very richly dressed, but her seat was not of such fine workmanship as that of the first. The third woman, standing by them, was cleanly-looking, and wore a green mantle over her dress, and was plainly the others' servant. When the king had gazed at them for a while, he stepped forward, and greeted them. She who sat on the golden chair asked who he was and whither he meant to go. He told her the whole story, that he was a king, had lost his queen, and had meant to sail to Hetland the Good, in order to engage the queen o that country. She answered: "Wonderfully has fate brought all this about. Hetland was invaded by Vikings, who killed my husband, the king, in a battle. Then I left the country in haste, sad in mind, and, after a long struggle, got hither. I am therefore the queen you are seeking, but these women I have with me are my daughter and my handmaid."

The king, therefore, lost no time in engaging her, and she returned a gentle answer, became glad in manner, and gave her consent at once to his wooing. After a short stay, they all embarked on board the vessel, and nothing is told of their travels, till they came home to the kingdom. The king then had a great feast prepared, and married the bride. For a while all was quiet. Hermódr and Hádvör paid little attention to the queen or her daughter. But Olöf, the queen's maid, and Hádvör soon became attached to one another, and Olöf used often to visit Hádvör in her castle. Before a long time had gone by, the king fitted out an expedition of war, and when he was gone, the queen came one day to Hermódr, and said to him: "It is my plan that you should marry my daughter."

Hermódr answered straightforwardly that that could never be. At this the queen grew angry, and declared that, for the first thing, Hermódr and Hádvör should no longer be allowed to enjoy one another's company;

"for," she said, "I lay this curse upon you, that you shall retire to a desert island, and be a lion by day, but a man at night, in order that you may ever remember Hádvör to your greatest torment. From this spell you shall not be delivered, until Hádvör has burnt the lion's shape you wear, which will be late."

When the queen had finished raving in this way, Hermódr answered: "Whenever I am delivered from your spell, I will lay this curse upon yourself and your daughter, that one shall be changed into a rat and the other into a mouse, and shall continue fighting in the palace till I kill you both with my own sword."

After this, Hermódr vanished, nobody knowing what had become of him. The queen had a search made after him, but he was nowhere to be found.

Once, when Olöf happened to be in the castle with Hádvör, she said to her: "Do you know what has become of Hermódr?" At these words Hádvör grew sad, and said: "Alas! I do not, indeed, know it." Olöf then said she would tell it her, as she knew it quite well. She said that Hermódr had vanished away, by the deed of the queen, who was a troll, and her daughter no less so, but they had managed to change their looks as they had done. But when Hermódr had refused to agree to her proposal that he should marry her daughter, she had laid upon him the spell of becoming a lion by day, and a man again at night, away in a desert island, where he should remain until Hádvör had burnt his lion's shape. She furthermore said that a match was held in view for Hádvör; for the queen had a brother in the under-earth world, a three-headed giant, whom she meant to change into the shape of a beautiful king's son, and thus make him marry Hádvör. She declared, too, that these were not the first or newest of the queen's tricks. She had stolen Olöf away from the home of her father and mother, and forced her to serve her, but had never prevailed by her tricks against her, for the green cloak she wore preserved her against any hurt intended by the foul troll. Hádvör became sorrowful and sad in mind about her intended marriage, and begged Olöf to give her, by all means, some good advice. Olöf said: "I fancy the bridegroom will appear from below, up through the floor of your castle. But when you hear the underground din, and when the floor begins to burst, and a yawning pit opens in it, you shall have at hand, ready for use, a pot full of boiling pitch; this you shall pour unsparingly into the yawning rift, and it will prove enough to kill him."

At this time, the king returned from his expedition, and found it rather awkward not to get any information about Hermódr's disappearance.

But the queen used all her powers of comforting, and managed to appease him at last about it.

Now the story returns to Hádvör, who sat in her castle, and made all due preparations to receive her suitor hinted at by Olöf. Not long afterwards it happened that, one night, there was heard a great underground din and rumbling, beneath the castle foundations. Hádvör knew what would be the cause of this, and called upon her maids to yield her their best aid. The rumbling and the din increased as it drew nearer to the castle, and now the floor began to burst up. Hádvör ordered forth the tar-pot, and poured its contents unsparingly into the hole; and thereupon the rumbling gradually grew less, and at last all was still.

Early the next morning, the queen said she must get up, and the king allowed her to do so. When she was dressed, she walked outside the gate of the town, and found there the giant, her brother, dead. The queen went to him, and said: "I lay the spell on thee that thou takest the shape of the most handsome prince, that Hádvör may have no excuses to make when I accuse her."

At once the body of the giant was turned into that of the handsomest of princes. After that, the queen returned home to the king, and said she found his daughter not of such lady-like virtue as she ought to be. She further declared that her brother had come thither in order to woo the princess, but that Hádvör had simply murdered him, and this, she said, she knew, for she had found his body lying outside the town. Then the king went with his queen to look at the body, and found all this a wonderful story, and said that such a beautiful prince had certainly been a good enough match for Hádvör, and that he himself would have been the first to consent to the marriage. Now the queen asked the king to let her have her own will in fixing the punishment Hádvör should have for her crime; to this he willingly agreed, as he said he could not fix his own daughter's punishment. In this case, therefore, the queen decided that the king should have a large cairn raised over her brother, and that Hádvör should be buried alive in the barrow with him. This the king deemed a good rede and a just sentence.

Now the story turns to Olöf, who knew well enough all this plot of the queen's. She therefore went to the castle of the king's daughter, telling her what plots were being hatched against her. Hádvör then begged her, by all means, to give her anything in the shape of advice. Olöf said: "First of all, you shall have a wide cloak over your clothes, when you go into the cairn. The giant is sure to be re-quickened, when you are first both together in the cairn, and will have by him two dogs. He will ask you to cut a slice of flesh out of your calves, to give to the dogs; but this you shall refuse to do, unless he tell you where Hermódr is, and how to find him out. But when you leave the cairn, the giant will put you on his shoulder, making believe to lift you up; he will, however, try to deceive you, by grasping at your cloak. Have it therefore loose on your shoulders, that he may only clutch it and not you." Now the cairn was ready, the body laid in it, and Hádvör obliged to go into it too, not being able to defend herself against the queen's charges. When they were both inside, all went on as Olöf had said. The prince came to life, and became the giant he had been before. Two dogs were with him, and he asked Hádvör to cut bits out of her calves for them, but she refused to do so unless he told her where Hermódr was, and how to get to him. The giant then told her that Hermódr was in a certain desert-island, which he named to her; but she could not get thither, unless she flayed the soles of her feet, and made shoes for herself out of the skin; and these shoes, when made, would be of such a nature, that they would take her through the air, or over the water, as she liked. After this Hádvör did as the giant had asked,—cut pieces out of her calves, and threw them to the dogs. Then she flayed the skin off the soles of her feet, and made shoes for herself out of it, and said to the giant that now she wished to go. The giant said she must needs get on to his shoulders: she did so, and thus got out of the cairn. But as she leapt up through the cairn she was grappled at by the cloak, in an unsparing manner. She had remembered well, however, to have it loose; wherefore the giant kept it empty in his hand, but Hádvör escaped. And now she went the shortest way, towards the sea, in the direction of the desert island, Hermódr's dwelling-place. She got well over the sea, for the shoes buoyed her up. When she had landed in the island, she saw that all round the coast there ran a sandy beach, but that this was bounded landwards by high and sheer cliffs; wherefore, seeing no way to get up them, and being sad in mind and overwhelmed with weariness, she lay down and fell asleep. Then she had a dream, that a woman of great size came to her, and said: "I know that you are Hádvör, the king's daughter, on a search for Hermódr. He is here on the island, but hard, I deem, will it be for you to manage to meet him; for if you act by yourself, and of your own power, you will not be able to mount the cliffs. I have therefore let down a rope, which will hold well; by this rope you can climb up, and get to the upper-island. As the island is very large, you will, most likely, have a long search before finding the dwelling of Hermódr; therefore, I have placed a ball of thread by your side. You have only to hold the end of the thread attached to it, and the ball will run on before you, and thus shew you the way. Furthermore, I put at your side a belt, which you shall buckle round your waist when you awake, and then you will never faint with hunger."

After this, the woman disappeared, and Hádvör saw that she had been true-dreaming in all that she had seen in her sleep. The rope hung over the rocks, and by her side lay the belt and the ball. Having clasped the belt round her, she hauled herself up by the cable, and thus mounted the rocks. After this, she took the thread-end of the ball, which now rolled away before her, never stopping till she came to the door of a cave not over large. She went into the cave, and saw there a lowly and lair-like bed, under which she crept and lay down. In the evening, she heard abroad some under-walking, and next could distinguish the sound of steps, and soon became aware that the lion was at the door of the cave, where it shook itself violently. Then she heard a man walk in to the bed. She was soon left without any doubt as to who the man was, as she heard him speaking to himself of his former state, repeating the loved name of Hádvör, together with many a memory of their bygone life. Hádvör took good heed not to move, but waited patiently till he was fast asleep. Then, knowing that his slumber was sound and fast, she crept out from beneath the bed, and taking the lion-shape which he had left outside, burnt it. After that, she went into the cave and roused Hermódr from his sleep, and now a meeting of great love and joy ensued. In the morning, when planning their departure, they were mighty anxious as to how to make their escape good. Hádvör told Hermódr her dream, and said she thought that on the island there was some one who would be able to help them. Hermódr said he knew that there was a she-troll, the most faithful troll possible, and that their only chance was to go and see her. So they sought for the cave of the she-troll, and found it. She was there, surrounded by her fifteen young sons. The lovers asked her to help them in getting away. She answered that many things were easier than that, for the giant with whom Hádvör had been in the cairn would be in their way, for he had changed himself into a great evil whale, intending to attack them as they passed over to the land. The troll said, however, that she would lend them a boat, and that if they should happen to see the whale, and deem their lives at stake, they might call out her name. They thanked her with many fair words for her promises and aid, and then put to sea from the island. On the sea, they saw an evil whale coming towards them, with much bustle and surf, and as they thought that no time for calling out the troll's name would be better than now, they called it aloud. No sooner was this done, than they saw coming towards them another whale of monstrous size, followed by fifteen smaller ones. All this shoal swam past the boat in which were Hermódr and Hádvör, against the evil-whale. Now a great whale-fight began, and the sea was so troubled, that the boat could scarcely be kept safe from the surf rising round the whales. Soon after, when the fight had lasted some while, Hermódr and Hádvör saw that the sea was blood-coloured, and the good whale and her young ones went away, but the lovers got all safe to shore.

Now turns the story to the king's palace, where a strange thing had taken place. The queen and her daughter had disappeared; but a rat and a mouse were always fighting there. Many would divide these disgusting combatants, but to no avail. Thus a good time passed. The king was in a sad state on account of his lost queen, and also because these hideous animals disturbed the peace of the court.

One evening, while all the folk sat thus in the palace, filled with loathing and disgust, Hermódr suddenly entered it, with his sword in his belt, and greeted the king, who received him with the greatest joy and happiness, deeming that he had indeed recovered him from the dead. But before Hermódr took any seat in the hall, he stepped towards the mouse and rat, and cut both asunder with his sword. All were astonished then at seeing, instead of a rat and a mouse, two trolls lying dead on the floor, and they were at once burnt to cold cinders. After that, Hermódr told the king the whole story, and the king, in his surprise, never could come to an end of wishing his son joy, upon being saved from the evil ones.

Then Hermódr asked his father's leave to marry Hádvör, which the other readily granted, and their marriage was speedily performed. The king, being old, gave up the crown and realm to his son, who was at once elected king. Olöf married a nobleman, and had a good husband. And thus ends this story.

THE STORY OF VILFRÍDR FAIRER-THAN-VALA.

AT a farm, there once lived a married couple. The name of the farmer is not given, but that of his wife was Vala. She was fair to look upon, but by no means a good-natured woman. This couple had a daughter by name Vilfrídr, and as she was thought to be fairer than her mother, she was bynamed "Fairer-than-Vala." This caused deep jealousy in the mother, who hated her daughter, and forthwith began to think over various plans for killing her. For that purpose, she took her, when fourteen years old, out into the forest, where she left her, in order that wild beasts might come and tear her to pieces. The poor girl roved about, helpless, in the wood the whole day, but when it was evening she sat down, worn and weary, under a certain stone. When she had been there a while, two dwarfs came to her, and asked her wherefore she was there. She told truthfully the reason, and when she had finished, they said it was no new story to them, as they had known it before. After that, they told her that the stone was their abode, and asked her to step into it with them. She was very glad, and accepted their offer. They did her every kindness they could. As they were going to rest, they told her that they dreaded having bad dreams, which would make them noisy in their sleep, and begged her, by all means, not to rouse them, whatever might come to pass, and this she promised. In the night they made an uproar in their sleep, and she took good care not to rouse them. Next morning, when they awoke, they thanked her for not having disturbed them, so that they had had rest to enjoy their dreams unmolested. They told her to be ready for a visit which would be made to the stone that day. She would be, they said, asked to open the door, but, whoever came, with whatever blandishments, she must by no means open the door, nor let the visitor in, as it might perchance be the death of them all.

This she promised, and then the dwarfs left home, for deer-hunting.

Now the story turns again to Vala. She had a glass that told her everything she asked of it. This same morning, she took the glass, to consult it, saying:

"My gold-rimmed glass, pray tell me how
Vilfrídr Fairer-than-Vala fares now."

The glass answered:

"Of ailments now she suffers none;
Fed she is by two dwarfs in a stone."

At this news, the good-wife was out of her wits with rage and spite, for she would have her daughter dead at any cost. She disguised herself, and walked off to the stone, where the home of the dwarfs was. When she came to the stone, it was closed. But knowing that Vilfrídr was within, and being just able to see her through a narrow rift in the door, she greeted her daughter with motherly affection, and prayed her, with many sweet words, to open the door. She said she brought a ring which had belonged to her grandmother, and which she wished Vilfrídr to have, and no one else.

Vilfrídr, catching a glimpse of the ring through the rift, found it of beautiful make, and stretched out one finger through the hole. At once, Vala put the ring on her finger, and said: "Hereby I lay the spell upon you, that this ring shall ever grow smaller and squeeze you to death, except gold of the same kind be found to match it; which will be late."

No sooner was the ring on her finger, than her hand began to swell up, and all her body was in agony. At night-fall the dwarfs returned, and said she had done ill to act against their commands; and now they began searching through their gold, and, after a long search, found gold of the very same kind as that in the ring. As soon as the gold was put to it, the ring burst, and Vilfrídr began to recover.

Next night the dwarfs had bad dreams, but Vilfrídr did not arouse them, whereof they were glad. In the morning, they begged her not to open the door; not even if her own mother should come with ever so many things to offer to her. And thereupon they went out, as before.

Now Vala went to her glass and said:

"My gold-rimmed glass, pray tell me how
Vilfrídr Fairer-than-Vala fares now."

But the answer she got was:

"Of ailments now she suffers none;
Fed she is by two dwarfs in a stone."

This was enough to drive Vala wild. She made another plot, and went off yet again. When she came to the stone, she found it closed. She called, however, with many sweet words, to her daughter, and prayed her to open the door to her. She said she brought with her a most valuable and precious thing,—a golden shoe that had belonged to her great-grandmother. Vilfrídr was slow and unwilling to listen to her mother's entreaties; but, when noon was past, she went so far for her words, as to put her foot out through a little hole in the door. Vala put the shoe on her foot, and said: "I lay on you the spell, that this shoe shall be your bane, unless gold of the same kind be found to match it; and that will be late."

After this, the mother left. But the shoe began to pinch Vilfrídr's foot, and it all swelled up with such pain, that she had no peace. When the dwarfs came home, they were greatly vexed at Vilfrídr's carelessness. They searched amongst their gold pieces, till at last they found, after much ado, the right gold; and the shoe, being touched with it, burst off the foot. Vilfrídr was faint after the pain, but by the aid of the dwarfs she recovered. When all was put to rights, the dwarfs went to rest. They soon slept, and made a most awful uproar in their sleep, even more than the times before. They kicked with their heels, and knocked their heads, but Vifrídr took good care not to rouse them from their sleep. When they awoke, they told Vilfrídr that she might expect a visit from her mother. And now they entreated her by no means to let her in, or open the door, whatever might be the deeds or words of her mother, for it might prove the bane of them all. After this, they went out hunting as usual.

That morning, Vala went to her glass, as was her wont, saying as before:

"My gold-rimmed glass, pray tell me how
Vilfrídr Fairer-than-Vala fares now."

The glass answered:

"*Of ailments now she suffers none;*
Fed she is by two dwarfs in a stone."

This trick she had not expected. She was out of her wits with rage, and set to work to busk herself for a journey to her daughter. She came to the stone, and appeared there weeping and crying, saying that she truly repented all she had done against her own daughter, and asked her pardon for it, declaring that she would make good atonement therefor. She said furthermore: "I bring now the dearest of gifts for you, —a belt, the most valuable gem of the family, having been handed down from one member to the other. Open me the door, my dearest daughter," she cried, "that I may behold how well it fits you, and that my Vilfrídr may see what a good mother she has got." When evening was coming on, Vilfrídr at last yielded to her entreaties, and, opening the door, let in her mother.

No sooner was Vala inside, than she clasped the belt round her daughter's waist, and having done so said: "It is my spell and command that this belt may so squeeze your waist, as never to be loosened, till the king of Saxland try to undo it!"

Now Vala thought she had made a good journey, and returned home. But Vilfrídr soon felt the pangs of the tightening belt, and after suffering dreadful tortures and agonies, was found in a death-swoon by the dwarfs, when they came home. She had only just so much consciousness left, as to be able to tell them her mother's spell. The dwarfs were greatly grieved at all this, and took, in a hurry, the rede of carrying Vilfrídr towards the sea, and put her down on a fine smooth spot on the sea-shore, and then she was so faint that that she could no longer speak. Then the dwarfs took each forth a pipe, and began piping. They blew so violently that a storm arose, and the sea became greatly agitated. This they did, as they knew that the King of Saxland was sailing not far from the coast. When the storm came on, the king resolved to seek shelter under the land, just, as it happened, where Vilfrídr was lying. When he had safely reached a haven, the weather all at once became calm, and he went ashore, and walked along the coast a little, till he came to the spot where he saw the beautiful maiden lying, all distorted and speechless. Seeing her thus, he thought it would be best to loosen her dress; and, as soon as he had succeeded in unclasping the belt, she began to recover, by his kind aid and treatment. When she awoke, she asked where the dwarfs were. Of this the king knew nothing. He now walked, at Vilfrídr's request, a little way along the shore with her, till they came to the place where the dwarfs were. But alas! they were both dead on the ground, with the pipes to their lips, and it was plain that they had burst from blowing too hard into their pipes. Vilfrídr was deeply grieved at seeing her dwarfs dead. But the king asked her to come home with him, and she thankfully accepted this offer, and, managing to take with her all the gold from the dwarfs' stone, embarked with this wealth on the king's vessel. Not long passed before the king's heart turned to Vilfrídr, and when he had wooed her, she thought it would be to refuse her only luck to say nay to such an offer. But she gave her consent, only on condition that her husband should never take a winter-guest, or engage one, save by her will and advice. The king said that this was only a slight request, which he certainly would grant. After this they were married, and thus Vilfrídr became the queen of Saxland.

The story now turns to Vala. She had not yet forgotten her daughter, and therefore went to her glass, saying as formerly :

"My gold-rimmed glass, pray tell me how
Vilfrídr Fairer-than-Vala fares now."

The glass answered :

"She is now queen of Saxland the vast;
And thus are her straits all over and past."

Vala was wild on hearing this, and did not know what to do. But, at last, she thought it best to go to her husband, and bid him go to Saxland, and become a winter-stayer at the king's court, and try, in that way, to do away with her daughter's life ; and to prove his having accomplished the task, she made him promise to give her a lock of Vilfrídr's hair, a piece of her tongue, and some of her blood. The carl undertook the journey, but of his journeying nothing is told till he came to the king's palace, where he found the king standing outside the door. He at once asked for a winter-stay with the king. But the king answered, that he could not give him any stay at his court, or in his palace, until he had spoken to his queen about it. The man, who named himself Raudr, began laughing heartily, and said scornfully, that he would have nothing to do with a king who was not his own master to decide upon such a trifling matter as this. "No," said he, "I will go to other kings, and defame you over all lands, if you have not got enough courage to take me in without consulting more people about it."

The king could not resist these threats. Soon after this, the king came to his queen, and said he had broken her conditions, and acted against her will, for he had now taken a winter-guest. She was grieved to hear this, but said it was no good speaking of it, as it had already taken place; "but," said she, "I have a foreboding that you will, at some time, regret this."

As time passed on, it was plain that the queen was not a wife alone, and when the time of her confinement came, midwives were not wanting, but, in spite of their skill, they declared they could not help the queen out of her trouble. The king was very grieved at this news, and, amongst others, Raudr offered his services, in order to try to help the queen. This offer the king accepted. No sooner was Raudr in the queen's room, than he ordered everyone out of it, midwives and all. After this he stuck a sleep-bramble into her ear, and she bore a fine male child. Now Raudr made a quick job of cutting off one of the child's ears, and thrusting it into the mouth of the sleeping mother; after which, he opened a window and flung the child out through it. This done, he ran to the king and bade him come. When they came into the chamber, Raudr looked about and made believe to be greatly astonished at not finding the child; after some search, he pointed towards the mouth of the mother, where the ear of the child could be seen, but she was now about to awake again, not knowing in the least what had passed already. The king was, as one may easily guess, shocked at this sight. Raudr suggested that, as she had plainly eaten the child, she had deserved death, but the king said he could not judge her, as he loved her so tenderly. At this time, therefore, Raudr thought he ought not to press the matter any further; and now he was held in great honour by the king, on account of his having rendered so valuable help to the queen.

A second time the queen was confined, and everything now happened as before. She could not give birth to her child, wherefore Raudr was fetched to help her; and he, putting the queen to sleep as before, took the child, a daughter, and cutting off her great toe, which he put into the queen's mouth, flung the child out of the window. Then he called the king, and sternly accused the queen, and insisted upon her being condemned to death. But of this the king would hear nothing. He said he loved her so much, that he could not live without her. "In this matter," he said, "I can do only one thing, and that is, to love her."

For a third time the queen was pregnant, and when the time of her confinement came, all things passed just as formerly. Raudr helped the queen, and the child was a male one; he cut off one of its fingers and put it into the queen's mouth, and then flung the child out of the window. This time Raudr spoke to the king, and said: "Now it is plain that your queen is a cannibal, and it is in the highest degree shameful for you to live with her, nor must you let her live."

The king said: "I can by no means pass a sentence upon her."

This duty, therefore, fell to Raudr, who by this time had become the king's first-minister. Raudr passed the following sentence of death upon Vilfrídr: that two slaves should take her into the wood, and there murder her; and to this the king agreed. Raudr bade the slaves bring back a lock of her hair, a piece of her tongue, and a horn filled with her blood, in order to prove that they had obeyed his commands. The thralls obeyed, but very unwillingly, for Vilfrídr had gained everyone's love and admiration. When they were in the wood, they began to think now to avoid doing this murder upon the queen. She advised them to take a lock of her hair, and having killed a dog that had followed them, to cut out its tongue, and pour its blood into the horn, that Raudr might have all he had bidden them bring back as proofs of having done the deed.

They did so, and leaving the queen free, went home to the palace, where it is not told that they were otherwise than well received.

When the queen had parted with the thralls, she wandered all day long in the forest, without finding any shelter, and now she began to fear that she was doomed to lose her life, through the pangs of hunger and cold. When dusk had become darkness, she found a hut, not over small, and of somewhat neat appearance. She knocked at the door, and out came a carl, of giant's features. He said to her: "I am unwont to be visited by guests like you. Pray step in, and be welcome." The queen saw, at once, that the old man must know to whom he spoke, and stepped inside, where she found all nicely clean and neat. She got enough good food to allay her hunger, and for the night she rested in a warm and easy bed. In the morning, when she got up, the old man gave her different stuffs, and asked her to amuse herself in cutting and sewing children's clothes, but he himself went from home, in order to get what things were needed. Thus the queen dwelt for a long time with the old man, and made the best of this turn of things.

Soon after the queen's departure, it was repeatedly complained of, that the sheep of the king's herd vanished, nobody knowing what became of them. One day, therefore, after this, the king, who, being tired of life since the loss of his queen and her supposed death, was used to kill the time by hunting and sport, suggested to Raudr that they should take a ride in the country, in order to see if they could not come on the track of some savage animal that ravaged the flock. They rode into a thick forest, and being in it, lost their way, not knowing whither to turn to find the path out of it. Sometimes they rode, and sometimes they walked and ran, but nothing they did would lead them out of the forest. When the day began to sink into evening, they both became weary; night approached, and hunger pressed hard upon them, and they knew not what to do. But in these straits, they saw a house through the thicket, not very far off, and thitherwards they turned their steps. They felt sure that human beings dwelt in it, and this thought was no little relief to them in their present need. When they came to the house, they knocked at the door, and in a short while, there came out an old man, of broad and big features. They greeted him, and he took their greeting. Then they asked him for shelter for the night, and the old man said that his house and what his house could afford were welcome to the king; but to Raudr, only on condition that he would tell the story of his life, which Raudr promised to do. After this, the old man took them in with him. They found it a neat little house, when inside, but were rather struck to see a huge pot of boiling water over a brisk fire. The carl bade the king sit down, but fetched a chair in which he bade Raudr place himself. Then he fetched a large ring, which he put on Raudr's hand, and told him to begin at once his life's story. Raudr began his tale, and told, in the beginning, everything truthfully and faithfully enough, but as the queen's name came into the story, he began to change and lie, telling falsehoods, and missing out the truth. But then the old man cried:

"Squeeze him now, my red ring, well:
Prick him, spikes, that the truth he tell!"

At these words, the ring squeezed pitilessly Raudr's hand, and up from the chair sprang spikes, which pierced him so sorely, that he was obliged to yield and tell the truth, for then the ring waxed easier, and the spikes pricked no longer. He tried repeatedly to misrepresent his life, but could not do so, for the old man always tortured him in the same way, and thus wrung from him the truth. During the latter part of the story, the king became very restless and uneasy; and at the end of it, the old man asked him what sentence he should pass upon Raudr, since now there was no doubt what manner of man he was, and what he had done. The king was, long since, out of his wits with sorrow and anger, and said: "Indeed, I cannot pass so hard a sentence on him as he deserves, for my laws do not provide for a wretch of so hellish a cast."

The carl asked if he might utter his opinion, and the king said he should be glad to hear his view of the matter. The carl answered: "I think the most fitting punishment for him, will be to throw him forthwith into the boiling pot on the hearth." To this the king agreed, and, without more ado, the old man took Raudr and flung him head-first into the boiling water, where ended his life. Thereupon the old man asked the king to come into another room, where the king saw a young maiden of beautiful looks. The old carl said: "There, king, you behold your own queen, although you did not perhaps expect to find her here, and therefore did not know her."

The king and queen were transported with delight, and in the midst of their pleasure at thus meeting again, the old man went into the next room, and came back, bringing with him three children, two boys and a girl. He soon proved that these were the children of the king; for one ear was wanting to one of the boys; to the other a finger; and the girl lacked her great toe. Their parents stood as if petrified with wonder, not understanding how all this could have happened. But the old man said that he had been present when they were thrown out of the window by Raudr, and had taken good care that they should receive no hurt. The king then asked the carl what he would have as a reward for all this. "Nothing," answered the other, "but your daughter, king."

Although he was not a very lovely match, and the king and queen would certainly that he had chosen any other reward, yet they agreed to this, and said they would comply with it if it was his will. When the king had stayed here to recover from his weariness, and had refreshed himself as much as he would, he returned home to the palace with Vilfrídr and his sons, leaving his daughter with her foster-father.

Some years now passed, and when the daughter of the king came of age, the old man said to her: "Sleep by my side to-night, in the bed." She loved her foster-father as a father, and complied with his wish. But, in the morning, when she awoke, she found a beautiful young prince lying by her side in the bed. He said to her: "Do not be afraid; I was a king's son under magic spells." After that, they went from the hut to the palace.

You need not doubt that they were received with joy; nor that the king and queen praised their luck, when they saw how all had cleared up about their daughter's future; nor yet that a great and beautiful banquet was held, nothing being wanting to the royal splendour and the gladness of everybody there. The king and Vilfrídr his queen lived long in great good luck and happiness of all kinds. The prince went home with his young bride, and they had both children and all other blessings of royal life. Nothing is told about Vala, and so ends the story of Vilfrídr Fairer-than-Vala.

THE STORY OF JONIDES, KING'S SON, AND HILDR, KING'S DAUGHTER.

THERE were once a king and queen who had a daughter by name Hildr, new-born at the beginning of this tale. The king was wont often to ride a hunting for his pleasure. It happened once when he was out in the forest, that he saw a great dragon flying with a child in his claws. The king shot at the dragon and was so fortunate as to hit it in the heart. The dragon fell instantly dead to the ground, and the king succeeded in getting the child alive. It was a boy, one year old, to judge from his looks, and very comely. The king kept the boy with him and called him Jonides, and had him fostered with Hildr his daughter, and treated him well in every way. Thus they grew up together, and loved each other much when they had outstripped the years of childhood. Hildr's grandmother was well skilled in the magic arts, and in that knowledge she made Hildr a good scholar, and Hildr was so clever, that she was able to make use of her art in many ways, even at the age of a child. Her grandmother saw that Jonides and Hildr were great friends, but she would by no means have it a match, and therefore made a plot for poisoning Jonides. Once she came into their room, bringing food for the young folk, and when she bade them eat, Hildr warned Jonides not to touch the food, as it was poisoned. Another time she would have murdered him in his bed, but Hildr had foreseen this, and put the trunk of a tree in the bed in his place. The old lady dealt the supposed sleeper a mighty blow with her axe, but it fixed itself in the trunk of the tree, and her hands in the same way to the handle of the weapon, and in that posture she sat till next morning.

Now Hildr saw that they could not stay safely in her father's town, on account of her grandmother's spite towards them, and therefore left it with Jonides. And when they came outside it, to a brook, she turned them both into the shape of trout, and into the brook both jumped. Her grandmother sniffed this somehow, and ran after them, trying by all means to catch the trout, but could not. Next night they took again their own shape, Hildr saying that the other would not do for them, as her grandmother was now making a net to catch the trout in.

"Let us go into the forest," she said.

The grandmother got an inkling of this, and sent two thralls into the forest, and ordered them to kill every living thing that came within their reach. The thralls went into the wood, but saw no living being till the evening, when they came across two beautiful dogs, so fine that they thought they had never seen their like. The dogs ran round the thralls, with a friendly wagging of their tails, but the men, in spite of all allurements, could not catch hold of them. After this, the thralls returned home and told the grandmother all about their expedition.

"Aha!" said she, "These dogs were no other than Hildr and Jonides; you have done an unmanly deed."

And she had them both killed for their service.

Hildr saw that this would no longer do for them. She therefore took forth a green cloth, and bade Jonides step into it with her. This done, the cloth soared into the air and moved onwards in the direction pointed out by Hildr, for the greatest part of the day, but in the evening she let it sink down, and when they were on the earth again, they found themselves amid fine plains and a beautiful nature.

"This is the land of your birth," said Hildr, "and you are the son of the king who ruled here. He is dead now, some years since. When you were in your first year, your mother walked with you into a certain flower-garden, where the dragon came and caught you out of her arms. This caused your father great sorrow, for he had no other child, and at last it brought him to the grave. Now the kingdom is without a head, for your mother has become bed-ridden from sorrow and anguish. Go now to the town, and tell your mother your story: she will then acknowledge you, and give into your hand the government of the country. I myself am going to take up my abode as a servant in a hut in the neighbourhood, but I beg and entreat you not to forget me."

Jonides said: "That will not happen, I am sure, for I love you as myself."

"This is, however, my greatest dread," she answered.

After this, she anointed him with some balm, and took leave of him with tears.

Jonides turned now towards the town; but on the way a dog came towards him and licked off all the ointment, and as soon as it had done so, Jonides forgot Hildr, and had no farther remembrance of her. When he came to the town he asked for an audience of the queen, which he obtained. He told her all the story of his life, and declared himself to be her son. She soon remembered what she herself had known of his life, and said she knew him from his likeness to his dead father. After this, he became king, and a good king he was found to be.

Soon after he had become king, a young and beautiful maiden came to the town. No one knew whence she came, nor had anyone ever seen her like in beauty. The king fell in love with her, and married her, but she was not thought so good as she was handsome.

Once it happened that one of the servants of the king's swine-keeper lost his way in a wood, and came to a hut, where he found an old man and an old woman, and Hildr. The servant asked for and got a night's shelter in the hut. But when the folk began to go to rest, the old man said to the servant: "There is no bed for you unless you will sleep with my daughter Hildr."

The servant said he found not many faults with that arrangement, for he had never seen a finer maid in his life. He therefore went to rest in Hildr's bed. Hildr said she wanted to go to the kitchen, as she had forgotten to hide the fire. The servant said he would do it for her, and bade her go to rest in the meantime. He went and began to hide the fire, but his hand became fixed to the hearthstones, and thus he spent all the night struggling to get free, which he contrived to do next morning, and bolted away at once. When the servant came home, the swine-keeper asked where he had been all night. He told him where he had been, and that he had slept in the same bed with the carl's daughter. Then the swine-keeper felt a wish to have a night's rest at this hut, and one day went thither and came in the evening and asked for a night's rest. The carl said he was welcome to it, and bade him step in The swine-keeper liked the look of the carl's daughter, and thought with great glee of the coming night. When the folk were going to rest, the carl said: "I have no place for you to sleep in save my daughter's bed."

The swine-keeper thought, well! there might be worse places than that, and went to bed. But when Hildr was going to bed, she cried: "Oh! now I have forgotten to shut the door of the hut," and was going out of the room in order to do it. The swine-keeper then said: "No! that shall not be; you must not go; I will shut the door."

He therefore got out of bed and ran to the door and barred it; but, wretched swine-herd! his hands stuck fast to the bar, and he could not get them loose till next morning, when, a great deal the worse for shame, he went, sadly disappointed, home.

Soon afterwards, it happened that the king was hunting, and was overtaken by a fog, and having parted company with his men, found himself alone in the mist. He went a long time astray, till he came to a hut, where he knocked at the door. An old man shewed himself and asked him to come in. This old man knew the king, and prayed him to pardon the smallness of the house he had. He gave the king all the good things he had in his house, and when he went to rest said to him: "I have no other bed to offer you, but must pray you to share that of my daughter."

The king said he would like that of all things, for he found the girl very handsome. But when Hildr was going to bed, she said: "Oh! dear me! I forgot to stall the calves."

"I will run down," said the king, "and put them into the stable for you."

He then went out and began running after the calves, but they were very unmanageable, as it is the wont of calves to be: at last he managed to catch hold of the tail of one of them, and became at once fixed to it, and thus he hung and clung to the calf's tail till morning, when Hildr, getting up, came out and saw this curious sight. She burst into roars of laughter, and said: "What an unkingly thing it is, to cling to a bull-calf's tail!"

The king begged her humbly to release him from this cursed tail, and she did so. She asked the king if he knew her not. He said: "No." She asked again if he remembered Hildr, the king's daughter, who had brought him home to his kingdom. He said he did not remember her either. Hildr then fetched the gallipot with the ointment in it, and anointed him, and then he remembered and recognized at once his Hildr, and embraced her lovingly. Hildr went on to tell him that his present queen was no other than her old grandmother; she had taken the shape of a young maiden, with a view to killing the king, but this Hildr had prevented up to this time. "But when you come home," she said, "I trust you will let her live no longer."

Thereupon they parted in great affection, and Jonides went home to his palace, and, as soon as he was at home again, had a sack drawn over his queen's head, and then drowned her. Afterwards, he sent a fine suite for Hildr, and married her in great state, and they lived long together in great love, had children, and after prospering in every way, died at a good old age.

THE STORY OF THE FARMER'S THREE DAUGHTERS.

NOT very far from a town, where dwelt the king, lived, once upon a time, a farmer. He was well to do, and had three daughters; the eldest was twenty years of age, the other two younger, but both marriageable. Once when they were walking outside their father's farm, they saw the king coming riding on horseback, with two followers, his secretary and his bootmaker. The king was unmarried, as were also these two men. When they saw him, the eldest of the sisters said: "I do not wish anything higher than to be the wife of the king's shoemaker."

"And I the wife of his secretary," said the second. Then the youngest said: "I wish then that I were wife of the king himself." Now the king heard that they were talking together, and said to his followers: "I will go to the girls yonder, and know what it is they were talking about. It seemed to me that I heard one of them say, "The king himself."

His followers said that what the girls had been chattering about could hardly be of much importance. The king did not heed this, however, but declared that they would all go to the girls and have a talk with them. This they did. The king then asked what they had been talking about, a moment ago, when he and his men passed them. The sisters were unwilling to tell the truth, but, being pressed hard by the king, did so at last. Now as the damsels pleased the king, and he saw that they were both handsome and fair-spoken, particularly the youngest of them, he said that all should be as they had wished it. The sisters were amazed at this, but the king's will must be done.

So the three sisters were married, each to the husband she had chosen.

But when the youngest sister had become queen, the others began to cast on her looks of envy and hatred, and would have her, at any cost, dragged down from her lofty position. And they laid a plot for the accomplishment of this their will. When the queen was going to be confined for the first time, her sisters got leave to act as her midwives. But, as soon as the child was born, they hid it away, and ordered it to be thrown into a slough into which all the filth was cast. But the man to whom they had entrusted this task could not bring himself to do it, so put the child on the bank of the slough, thinking that some one might find it and save its life. And so it fell out; for an old man chanced to pass the slough soon afterwards, and finding a crying child on the bank, thought it a strange find, took it up, and brought it to his home, cherishing it all he could.

The queen's sisters took a whelp, and shewed it to the king as his queen's offspring. The king was grieved at this tale, but being as fond of the queen as of his own life, he restrained his anger, and punished her not.

At the second and third confinement of the queen, her sisters played the same trick: they exposed the queen's children, in order to have them drowned in the slough. The man, however, always left them on the bank, and it so happened that the same old carl always passed by, and took up the children, and carried them home, and brought them up as best he could.

The queen's sister said that, the second time the queen was confined, she had given birth to a kitten, and the third time, to a log of wood. At this the king waxed furiously wroth, and ordered the queen to be thrown into the house where he kept a lion, as he did not wish this monster to fill his kingdom with deformities. And the sisters thought they had managed their boat well, and were proud of their success. The lion, however, did not devour the queen, but even gave her part of its food, and was friendly towards her; and thus the queen lived with the lion a wretched enough life, without anybody's knowing anything about it.

Now the story turns to the old man who fostered the king's children. The eldest of these, a boy, he called

Vilhjálmr; the second, also a boy, he called Sigurdr. The third child was a girl, and her name is unknown.

All that came to him or with whom he met, the old man would ask if they knew nothing of the children he had found on the bank of the slough. But no one seemed to have the faintest notion about their birth or descent. As the children grew up, they were hopeful and fine-looking. The carl had now waxed very old, and expecting his end, he gave the children the rede,—always to ask everyone to whom they spoke, for news of their family and birth, in order that they might perchance be able at last, to trace out the truth. He himself told them all he knew about the matter. After this the old man died, and the children followed closely his advice.

Once there came to them an old man, of whom they asked the same questions as of all others. He said he could not give them any hints on the matter himself, but that he could point out one to them who was able to do so. He told them that a short way from their farm, was a large stone, whereupon was always sitting a bird which could both understand and speak the tongue of men. It would be best for them, he went on, to find this bird; but there was a difficulty in the matter, to be got over first, for many had gone there but none had ever returned. He said that many king's children had gone to this bird, in order to know their future fate, but they had all come short in the very thing needed. He told them that whosoever wanted to mount the stone, must be so steady as never to look back, whatever he might hear or see, or whatever wonders seemed to take place around the rock. All who did not succeed in this were changed into stones, together with everything they had with them. This steadiness no one had had yet, but whosoever had it could easily mount the rock, and having once done so would be able to quicken all the others who had been turned to stone there. For the top of the rock was flat, and there was a trap-door on it, whereon the bird was sitting. Underneath the trap-door was water, the nature of which was that it would turn all the stones back to life again. The old man ended by saying: "Now he who succeeds in getting to the top is allowed by the bird to take the water and sprinkle the stone-changed folk, and call them to life again, just as they were before."

This the king's children thought no hard task. The brothers, however, were the most outspoken about the easiness of the thing. They thanked the old man much for his story, and took leave of him.

Not long after this, Vilhjálmr, the eldest brother, went to the rock. But before he left, he said to his brother, that if three drops of blood should fall on his knife at table, while he was away, Sigurdr should come at once to the rock, for then it would be sure that he had fared like the others. So Vilhjálmr went away, following the old man's directions, and nothing farther is told of him for a while. But after three days, or about the time when his brother should have reached the stone, three drops of blood fell upon Sigurdr's knife, once, while at table. He was startled at this, and told his sister that he must needs leave her, in order to help his brother. He made the same agreement with his sister, as Vilhjálmr had before made with him. Then he went away, and, to make the story short, all came to the same issue with him as with his brother, and the blood-drops fell on his sister's knife, at the time when Sigurdr should have reached the stone.

Then the damsel went herself, to see what luck she might have. She succeeded in finding the rock, and when she came there she was greatly struck with the number of stones that surrounded it, in every shape and position.

Some had the form of chests, others of various animals, while some again were in other forms. She paid no heed to all this, but, going straight forward to the great rock, began climbing up it.

Then she heard, all of a sudden, behind her, a loud murmur of human voices, all talking, the one louder than the other, and amongst the number she heard those of her brothers. But she paid no heed to this, and took good care never to look back, in spite of all she heard going on behind her. Thus she got at last to the top of the rock, and the bird greatly praised her steadiness and constancy, and promised both to tell her anything she chose to ask of him, and to assist her in every way he could. First, she would have the surrounding stones recalled to their natural shapes and life. This the bird granted her, pointing to one of the stones, and saying: "Methinks you would free that one from his spell, if you knew who he was."

So the king's daughter sprinkled water over all the stones, and they returned to life again, and thanked her for their release with many fair words.

Next, she asked the bird who were the parents of herself and her brothers, and to whom they might trace their descent. The bird said that they were the children of the king of that country, and told her how the queen's sisters had acted by them at their birth, and last of all told her how her mother was in the lion's den, and how she was nearer dead than alive from sorrow and want of good food and comfort.

The stone which the bird had pointed out to the princess was a king's son, as noble as he was handsome. He cast affectionate looks to his life-giver, and it was plain that each loved the other. It was he who had brought the greater part of the chest-shaped stones thither, the which were coffers full of gold and jewels. When the bird had told to everyone what each wanted to know, all the company of the disenchanted scattered, the three children and the wealthy prince going together. When they came home, the first thing they did was to break into the lion's den. They found their mother lying in a swoon, for she had lost her senses on hearing the house broken into. They took her away, and she soon afterwards recovered. Then they dressed her in fitting attire, and taking her to the palace, asked audience of the king. This granted, Vilhjálmr, Sigurdr and their sister declared to the king that they were his children, and that they had brought with them their mother from the lion's den. The king was amazed at this story and at all that had happened. The sisters of the queen were sent for and questioned, and having got into scrapes by differing in accounts, confessed at last their misdeed and told the truth. They were thrown before the same lion that the queen had been given to, and it tore them to pieces immediately, and eat them up, hair and all.

Now the queen took her former rank, and a banquet was held in joy at this happy turn of affairs, and for many days the palace resounded with the glee of the feast. And at the end of it, the foreign prince wooed the king's daughter, and gained easily her hand, and thus the banquet was begun afresh, and became the young people's marriage-feast. Such glee has never been witnessed in any other kingdom. After the feast, the strange prince returned to his home with his bride, and became king after his father. Vilhjálmr also married and took the kingdom after his father. Sigurdr married a king's daughter abroad, and became king after the death of his father-in-law; and all of them lived in luck and prosperity. And now is the story ended.

THE STORY OF MŒRTHÖLL.

THERE once lived an earl who had a young wife. They loved each other much, but they had no children, which grieved both of them much.

Once the lady went out to divert herself, into a beautiful grove. When she came there, she was overcome with such a resistless desire to sleep, that she could not move from the spot. As soon as she had fallen fast asleep, she dreamt that three women in blue mantles came to her, saying: "We know that it makes you unhappy to have no children, and we are here to advise you what you shall do when you awake. Go to the brook that flows not far hence, and there you will see a trout, and laying yourself down to drink where the trout is, you must try to get it into your mouth, and you will at once conceive. At the time of your confinement we will be present, for we want to have our own will as to the name to be given to the child."

Then they vanished.

When the lady awoke, she thought over her dream, went to the brook, saw the trout, and doing all that she had been bidden in her sleep, walked home. As time passed, she felt that she was with child, the which afforded great joy both to herself and to her husband.

Not far from their dwelling was a small cottage, where lived an old man with his old wife; they had a daughter, young and hopeful, by name Helga.

When the lady felt the day of her confinement approaching, she called the old cottage-woman to her, and when she came, said to her: "You shall serve me and sit over me through my illness. I expect three ladies to come, and you must receive and treat them as well as you can; I have got everything ready for them, wines and all." Soon afterwards she had a child, a beautiful girl; and the same day three women came to the house, all giving themselves the name of Blue-cape. The old woman bade them to table, and brought out, for two of them, all the delicacies the lady of the house had put aside for them. But what was meant for the youngest of the three she took to herself. Now the third Blue-cape, seeing that she was made less of than the others, swelled with anger. They asked to be allowed to see the child, and their wish was granted. The eldest took first the child, and said: "You shall be hight Mœrthöll, after my mother. I pronounce upon you the spell, that, in honour and wit, you shall surpass every lady. I pronounce upon you the spell, that every tear you shed shall be changed into gold, and in this you shall stand alone of all women that ever have lived."

After this, she gave the child to her second sister, who sat next to her, and who said: "I agree to your being called Mœrthöll,—after my mother. And I wish that you may obtain all the good my sister has told in her spell, and that you may be adorned with all womanly virtues. I add farther the spell, that you shall be married to a young prince, that you shall love one another with true and deep affection, and that all shall turn to your honour, all your life through. Farther to add to my luck-spell is not within my power."

She now handed the child to her youngest sister, who received it and said: "You have my mother to thank, bearing as you do her name Mœrthöll, that I neither can nor shall annul the good spells of my sisters, albeit your mother has dishonoured me, innocent as I was. But suffer for her sake, in some degree, you must, for I add to the other spells, that, the first night you go to bed with the prince, you shall turn into a sparrow and fly out of the window. From this curse you shall never be free, unless you are so lucky that some one seizes your sparrow-shape on the third night of your marriage. Each of the first three nights you shall lay aside that shape for a little while, but, if that chance goes by, never afterwards."

The two sister Blue-capes, hearing this waxed very angry with her, for having laid upon the harmless child so evil a spell. They all three got up and rushed away, and were never seen again.

The child grew up in the house of her father and mother, and, sure enough, her tears all turned to gold, whereby the earl became very rich, so much so that his whole castle was covered with gold. He was also, therefore, very fond of his daughter. He had a bower made for her, and gave her, as a companion, Helga, he carl's daughter. These two were much attached to one another.

Now it was rumoured through all countries that there was an earl's daughter who wept gold, and, amongst others, it came to the knowledge of a wealthy prince, and he made a vow that he would marry her and no other woman. He busked speedily for a journey, and sailed from one country to another, till he came to the earl. He now saw that everything was covered with gold, and sent a message from his ship to tell the earl his errand. The earl received the message very kindly, and offered to entertain the prince and all his suite, although he was sad in mind at losing his daughter. He then called her and Helga before him, and said: "You must change clothes, and you, Helga, shall go before my daughter when the prince comes."

They promised to follow his orders. When the prince came to the castle, he wished to be allowed to see Mœrthöll. The earl said he was welcome to do so. The two maidens went before the prince, Helga going first. He looked at both for a while, and thought that she who came last was altogether the best looking. He said: "I will try if what I have been told about your daughter is true," and gave them both at once a good slap on their faces. She who came first wept as other women do, but gold fell down over the cheeks of the other. Then said the prince: "Now do I see that the earl wanted to cheat me, Mœrthöll being she who walks last."

He told her she need disguise herself no longer, and might change back her clothes at once. This done, he put her on his lap, and afterwards sailed away with her. She brought away as a dowry, the greatest part of the gold that was in the castle, and Helga, the cottager's daughter, went with her. They had a fair wind home, to the realm of the prince's father, who welcomed them with open arms, and had a magnificent wedding-feast got ready for them, and all the gay and joyous banquet went off smoothly. But as the bride was led to the bed, she asked leave to go out alone for a while with Helga the carl's daughter. This was granted. When they were alone, she said to Helga: "You have long been faithful to me: I now ask you to be once more true to me, and to sleep three nights in the arms of the prince, for the spells that have been laid upon me must come true; let us now exchange here, clothes and looks."

Helga said: "I will do all I can to comply with your wish. But the worst thing in the matter is that, as you know, the prince gives you, every night, a handkerchief, which you fill with your tears and give back to him every morning. I am sure it will cost my life, if I cannot give him the gold."

The other answered: "You shall prick him with a sleep-thorn, when you are both in bed, that he may soon fall fast asleep. After doing that, leave him alone, and come to a knoll which is a short way hence, and call to me that I may hear. I am doomed to be a sparrow every night; but during the three first nights after my marriage, I am allowed to lay aside for a while the bird's shape. Meanwhile I can weep for you, as we talk together."

Helga said she would readily do her best to help her in this matter. Then they changed clothes and looks, and were both full of sorrow. Helga went into the bed with the king's son, and Mœrthöll spread the clothes over them, and immediately afterwards was changed into a sparrow and flew away. The king's son, thinking that Mœrthöll was with him, gave Helga a handkerchief to weep into. Helga stuck a sleep-thorn into his ear, and then got up alone. She went to the appointed knoll, and called:

"Come, my Mœrthöll, come!
Come, my friend, oh, come!
Come, my maiden bright,
O'er heathery way by night!
The gold-pay hour is near,
But I can shed no tear."

Then came a sparrow and sat by her. And Mœrthöll threw off the sparrow-shape, and wept the handkerchief full. She took the sparrow-shape immediately again, but Helga went to bed by the prince, and gave him, when he awoke next morning, his handkerchief full of gold.

On the second night, everything passed as on the first.

On the third night Helga stuck the sleep-thorn purposely somewhat looser than before; and then going forth to the mound, called Mœrthöll as she was wont. Then Mœrthöll said to Helga: "After this we shall see each other no more, for I have no hope of ever being free from this spell. I thank you for all the faithfulness you have shewn me, and may it ever fare well with you. If it were in my power, I should like, most of all, that you should marry the prince." After this, they fell to embracing each other for a long time, for they were both bitterly grieved at parting.

Now we must tell how the prince awoke, the sleep-thorn having fallen out of his ear. He was surprised at finding the bride gone, and jumping up, dressed himself and ran out. Looking all round, he at last discovered two women siting on a knoll. He went thither and listened, and heard all they said. He saw also the sparrow-shape, and caught it up quickly. At this, both the women, the princess and Helga were so frightened that they fainted away. The prince went off with the sparrow-shape and burnt it with all speed, and then returning to the women, refreshed them with wine and brought them away. Then Mœrthöll told her life's story, and folk deemed her lucky that the prince had caught the sparrow-shape. A new wedding-feast was held, and nothing was afterwards heard or seen of the princess changing her shape. The prince loved Mœrthöll deeply, they had several children, and lived together in great joy. Helga married one of the highest officers in the country, and was always counted among worthy women, because of her faithfulness to Mœrthöll.

And this is the end of the story of Mœrthöll.

The Troll in the Stone-craft.

There were once a king and queen who had a son, by name Sigurdr. He was early a forward youth, strong and active in every manly sport, and fair of look. When his father felt the heaviness of old age creeping on him, he had a talk with his son, saying that it was now high time for him to find himself a fit match, for it was by no means sure that he himself, his father, would live long after this, but that it would be the highest pitch of good luck and honour for his son, if he got a wife of his own rank. The king said too, that abroad, in some far-off land, which he named, there was a king who had a daughter as beautiful as she was good. "And if you," continued he, "married her, I think the match would be the best of any."

Hereupon, father and son parted, and Sigurdr the prince went to the kingdom his father had pointed out. He appeared before the king, and wooed his daughter. The matter was soon settled, through the king's willingness, but only on condition that Sigurdr should dwell with him as long as he possibly could, for the king himself was very infirm, and ill able to govern his kingdom. Sigurdr entered into this agreement, but reserved being allowed to go home into his own kingdom when he got the news of his father's death, who was, he said, on the very brink of the grave. After this, Sigurdr drank the marriage to his love, the king's daughter, and took in hand the government together with the king, his father-in-law. Sigurdr and his wife loved each other dearly, and yet deeper rooted became their love when she bore him, after a year had passed, a son, a fine and handsome boy. Now time passed until the child was in his second year, when Sigurdr had the news of his father's death. He made himself ready to start, and went away, with his wife and son, on board a vessel.

When they had sailed some days, the wind fell into a perfect calm; they were within one day's voyage of home. The vessel lay becalmed, and rolled in the smooth water. Once, the married couple were alone on the deck with their son, most of the crew having fallen asleep, as nothing was to be done on board. They sat together talking, and had their son between them. After some time, Sigurdr was so overwhelmed with sleep, that he could keep awake no longer. He therefore went down below and fell asleep. The queen was then left alone on the deck with her son, and amused herself in playing with him. When some time had passed since the prince went down below, the queen saw a dark shadow in the sea, on the horizon, which seemed swiftly to approach the vessel. As it drew nearer, she could see that it was a boat, then that it was rowed by oars, then that some human shape seemed to move in it, and at last the boat came up to the vessel, and the queen saw that it was of stone; and out of it there came on board the ship an awful and fierce-looking she-troll. The queen was so frightened that she could not utter a word, nor could she move from the spot in order to arouse the king or the crew. The troll then stepped up to the queen, and took the boy out of her hands, and stripped off all her costly clothes, leaving her only her linen ones on. After this, the troll began to put on the queen's clothes and to turn a little into comely shape. Last of all, she took the queen, put her into the stone-craft and said:

"This is my speech, and this my spell,
That, never resting, thou shalt go,
Faring, to my brother, who doth dwell
Down in the worlds below."

The queen sat as if frozen, unable to move, but the stone-craft glided swiftly away from the vessel, and was, within a short while, out of sight. When it was no longer to be seen, the boy began to cry, and the troll certainly did not trouble herself much to soothe him, finding the slight trials she made to do so quite vain. She then walked, with the boy on her arm, down below the deck, into the cabin where the king was sleeping, and roused him by sharply rebuking him for caring nothing about her, as he left her alone with their son on the deck, while he slept and snored together with his crew. She declared it was shamefully heedless of him, and too bad, indeed, to let no one be awake on board with her, as nobody could tell what might happen. She further said that she had another misfortune yet to fight with; she could not soothe the boy, and therefore wanted to get with him to the end of the voyage as quickly as possible, which certainly was no very hard thing, if only he and his crew would bestir themselves, as a foaming, fair wind had just now sprung up.

King Sigurdr was not at little startled at his queen's having, all of a sudden, become such a shrew, and so harsh-spoken,—she who had never before uttered to him one peevish word. However, he took her rebukes gently, saying it was no wonder she was cross, and then went up, and calling the crew, bade them hoist sails, as there was a fair wind, and they could sail straight into harbour. So they sailed on, and nothing more is told of their journey till they came to the land over which Sigurdr had to reign. He went to the court, and all the people were in mourning for the death of his father; but they rejoiced at having his son safely back home, and gave him at once the name of king, and he took the head of the government. The boy, his son, never left off crying while with the queen, from the time of his being alone with her on the deck; the which was a wonderful change, as he had been always before, the quietest and gentlest of children. The king, therefore, got one of the maidens at the court to be his nurse; and, as soon as the boy was with her, he recovered again his former quietness and gentleness.

Now we must tell how, after the voyage, the king thought his queen changed in many ways, and in none to her advantage. She was, especially, more harsh, peevish, and altogether more disagreeable than had formerly been her wont. She was, however, polite, and of lady-like manners enough when she chose to be so.

There were at the court two lads, one eighteen and the other nineteen years of age. They were greatly given to playing chess, and were always sitting over their chess-board. Their room was next to the queen's, and, at certain hours of the day, they used to hear something strange going on in the queen's room. One day they paid more heed to this than they had before done, and put their ears to a crack in the wall between the queen's room and their own, and heard distinctly the queen saying: "When I yawn a little yawn, I am a neat and tiny maiden; when I yawn a half-yawn, then am I as a half-troll; when I yawn a whole yawn, then am I as a whole-troll." When the queen had said this she was at once seized by some horrid fit of retching, that made her yawn awfully. Thereupon she turned, in a moment, into a savage-looking troll, and up through the floor of her room there came a three-headed giant, with a trough full of meat. This strange guest greeted her as his sister, and put the trough before her. She set to work to empty the trough, never stopping till she had finished eating all that was in it. The lads saw the whole of these proceedings, but noticed no exchange of words between brother and sister. And nothing amazed them more than to see how the queen gobbled down the meat, and how much she was able to take of it; no wonder, therefore, they thought, that she ate so little when she sat at table with the king. When she had finished eating all that was in the trough, the giant disappeared down the same way he had come up, and the troll took her queen's shape again.

Now the story turns to the king's son, whom we left in charge of his nurse. One evening, when the nurse had kindled the light, and was sitting with the prince on her lap, some boards in the floor suddenly burst up, and through them rose a beautiful lady, dressed only in white under-robes, with an iron belt round her waist, from which an iron chain of countless links led down into the earth as far as could be seen. The lady went silently towards the child, took it from the nurse, and embraced it fondly, and then gave it to the nurse again. After this, she disappeared the same way that she had come, and the floor closed over her head. Although the lady did not utter a word, the nurse grew mightily frightened, but yet kept the whole thing to herself. The next night, the lady in white came up at the same moment as before, took the child, caressed it fondly, and then gave it back to the nurse again. But as she was leaving, she said with a sad mien and tearful look: "Two are past; and only one is left." Then she disappeared down the same way, and the floor fell into its place again. Having heard the lady say these words, the nurse was far more frightened than before. She fancied that from these visits some danger might fall upon the child; albeit the strange lady seemed very good, she thought, and behaved to the child as if she had carried it under her heart. But the strangest thing to her was, that the lady had said: "And only one is left." She thought that by these words she had meant, that having come thither two days running, she would come once more on the third. The nurse, therefore, determined to go to the king, and tell him all that had happened, and beg him, by all means, to be present in her room, the next day, at the wonted hour of this lady's visits. The king promised to be on the spot. Next day, the king came some while before the appointed hour, and seated himself with a drawn sword in his hand. Soon after, the planks in the floor burst up, and there rose the same lady in white, with the iron belt and linked chain. The king recognized at once his wife, and the first thing he did, was to cut asunder the chain that stretched from the iron belt into the earth. But at this, there arose such a din, and thunderous noises down in the earth, that the whole palace trembled as a leaf, and folk thought that every house in the town would fall and be overthrown. At last, after a time, this quaking and underground uproar passed away, and people recovered from their panic. The king and his wife embraced each other fondly, and she told him the whole story, how the troll came to the vessel, in a stone-craft, when all the crew were asleep, how she stripped her, and how she laid upon her her awful spell. She told him how the stone-barge had sped from the ship of its own accord, and how, having got far out of sight of the ship, it had seemed to her as if it passed through some gloomy and murky region, till it stopped by a three-headed giant, who would have made love to her if she had let him. She said that the giant had then thrust her into a lonely cell, and threatened her never to let her out, until she had given him her love and affection. Now and then, in the course of each day, he had looked after her. When some time had passed, she had, she said, begun to lay a plot for getting out of this troll's hands. Therefore she had promised him her love, if he would first grant her leave to see her son on earth, three days running. This he had granted, but put the iron belt round her with the chain attached to it, the other end of which he had girt about his own middle. The din, she thought, had been caused, when the king cut the chain in sunder, by the giant's falling down all the underground passage at the sudden giving way of the chain, for his abode was just underneath the town, and so he had most likely broken his neck; the earthquake might have been his death-struggle. "But therefore," said the queen, "did I make the condition of seeing my son three days running, that I thought it would lead to something coming to my help, as has now come to pass."

Now the king understood well the harshness and peevishness of the woman with whom he had had to live for some time. He at once had a sack drawn over her head, and herself stoned to death, and after that, she was tied to wild horses, who tore her body to pieces. The lads who had formerly seen the queen's trollish ways, now told what they had beheld, not having dared do so hitherto, from dread of the troll-queen's cruelty. And now the queen resumed her rank, and was beloved by everybody. And the nurse was, through the influence of the king and queen, married to a great nobleman, and presented by both with a large and handsome dowry.

THE STORY OF HLINI, THE KING'S SON.

THERE were, once upon a time, a king and queen. The king's name was Hríngar, but the name of the queen is not mentioned. They had one son, by name Hlini. He was, in early youth, a hopeful boy, and likely to make a brave hero. In the garden-corner, there lived an old man and woman, who had a daughter hight Signý.

Once the king's son went a hunting, together with the other courtiers of his father. Having caught some deer and sundry birds, they turned homewards, but such a dark fog overtook them, that they lost sight of the king's son. They sought him for a long while in vain, and at last gave up the search and went home. When they came to the palace of the king, they told how they had lost Hlini, and had been unable to find him again. At this news the king grew very sad, and next day he sent many folk out in search of him. They searched all day, till nightfall, without any result; and thus passed three days that Hlini was sought for, but never found. This so filled the king with sorrow, that he was thrown on his bed like a dead man. He published a decree, whereby he promised to the person who should find Hlini, the half of his kingdom.

Signý, the carl's daughter, heard of the prince being lost, and also of the reward his father had promised to the finder of him.

She therefore went to her parents, asked them for provisions and new shoes, and went off in search of the prince. When she had walked the greater part of the day, she came, at eventide, to a cave, into which she stepped. She saw here two beds, one with a silver-woven cover, and the other with a gold-woven one. She looked about, and saw that the king's son was sleeping in the bed with the gold-woven coverlet, and trying to rouse him from his sleep, found herself in no way able to do so. Next, she saw that on the bed were written some runes, which she did not understand. After this, she went to the entrance of the cave, and hid herself in a nook behind the door. She had not long been hidden, when she heard some rumbling noise, and saw two troll-women, of gigantic growth, enter the cave. When they had come in, one said: "Phew! Pah! what a stink of men in our cave!"

But the other said: "That is from Hlini, the king's son."

Then they went up to the bed where he was sleeping, and said:

"Sing, my swans, with cheer and glee,
That Hlini from sleep aroused may be."

Then sang the swans, and Hlini awoke. The younger troll then asked if he would not have something to eat. He said: "No." Then she asked if he would not marry her. He said: "No," harshly. Then she cried aloud, saying:

"Sing, my swans, with strains so deep,
That Hlini entranced may fall asleep."

The swans sang, and Hlini fell asleep. After this the trolls went to rest in the bed which had the silver-woven coverlet on it. In the morning, when they got up, they woke Hlíni and offered him something to eat, but he would have nothing. Then the youngest asked him if he would not marry her, but he refused that match, as before. Then they put him to sleep in the same way as formerly, and went away.

When they had been some little time out, Signý got forth from her hiding-place, and awoke the prince by the same means as the trolls had used. She greeted him, and he received joyfully her greeting, and asked her for news. She told him all that had happened, and of the sorrow his father had felt at the loss of his beloved son. She then asked him about his own doings.

He said that, after having parted with his father's courtiers, he met two trolls who had brought him hither, one of them always trying to persuade him to marry her. But this he had steadily refused to do, as Signý had heard.

"Now, to-night," said Signý, "when the troll asks you to marry her, you shall consent, on condition that she shall tell you what is written on the beds, and what the trolls do in the day-time."

This the prince thought good advice. After this, he asked Signý to play chess with him, and they went on playing till evening. When dusk came on, she put him to sleep, but went, herself, to her hiding-place. Soon after, she heard the trolls come striding into the cave with a bundle of birds. They kindled the fire, and the elder troll began cooking, but the younger went to Hlini's bed, woke him, and asked if he would have something to eat. He accepted the offer. When he had eaten his meal, she asked him if he would not marry her. He said he would do so, if she would tell him the meaning of the runes on the beds. She said the runes meant:

> "Roll, my bed, roll quickly on
> Whithersoever I wish thee,—begone!"

That was good, he said. "But you must make some more sacrifices, if I am to marry you, and tell me what you are doing all day in the woods."

She said they hunted beasts and caught birds, but when they had some rest from hunting, they sat down under an oak and threw their life-egg between them. He asked if this was in any way a delicate thing to handle. She said that it must not be broken, for then they would both be instantly dead. The prince said: "Now you have done well to tell me this. But I will rest till to-morrow"

She bade him have his own will, and put him to sleep at once. Next morning she woke him to breakfast, which he eat with pleasure. Then asked the younger troll if he would not come with them into the wood to-day. He said he preferred being at home. So the troll bade him farewell, and put him to sleep, and went away with the other.

When they had been away some time, Signý got forth from her hiding-place, woke the prince, and bade him get up.

"Now," she said, "we will go out into the forest where the trolls are. You take your spear with you, and when they begin to throw their life-egg between them, hurl your spear at the egg. But if you miss it, your life is at stake."

This the prince found to be good advice, and now they both stepped on to the bed, and said: "Run, run, my bed, to the trolls in the wood." Then the bed ran away and did not stop till it came to an oak in the wood. There they heard a great laughter. Signý bade the prince climb up into the oak, which he did. He then saw both the trolls under the oak, and one of them held a golden egg in her hand. She soon threw it to the other, and in the same moment, the prince, hurling his spear at it, hit it in its flight, and broke it. At this the trolls suddenly changed, and they rolled, with foaming mouths, in death-spasms on the ground. Thereupon the prince came down from the oak, and he and Signý went back in the bed to the cave. They took everything of value from the cave, and filled both the beds therewith. Then they stepped, each into one of them, and spoke the runes, and the beds ran home to the garden-corner with the prince, and Signý, and all the precious things in them. The old man and his wife welcomed them heartily, and bade them rest there that night, which they gladly did.

Early the next morning, Signý went to the king's palace, and stepped up before the king and greeted him. The king asked who she was. She said she was the carl's daughter from the garden-corner, and asked him what reward he would think fit for her, if she had brought home his son safe and sound. The king replied that this question would hardly need an answer, as there was no chance of her finding his son, since all his men had sought for him in vain. Signý asked if she was not entitled to the same reward for finding him as others had been promised in the decree? He said it should be so. Then Signý went home to garden-corner, and took with her the prince to the king's palace, and appeared before the king with his son. The king welcomed lovingly his son, and bade him sit at his right hand, and tell all that had come to pass since he had lost his way from the hunting-party of courtiers. Then the king's son sat down on the throne, and gave Signý a seat at his own right hand, and told all the story as it had happened, and said that this damsel was his life-giver, for she had delivered him from the hands of the trolls. Then rose Hlini from his throne, and stepping up to that of his father, begged leave to take this damsel for his wife. The king gave willingly his consent, and made ready at once for a grand marriage-feast, to which he bade all the greatest people in his country. The marriage-feast lasted for a whole week, and after it, every one returned to his own home. All praised the king's liberality, for he had given rich parting gifts to every one of his guests. The prince and Signý, his wife, loved one another long and well; and hereby is made an end of this story.

THE STORY OF HLINIK, THE KING'S SON, AND THÓRA, THE CARL'S DAUGHTER.

ONCE there lived a king and queen in their realm, and a carl with his old woman in the corner of the garden-wall, as often happens in stories. The king had three sons, Hlinik, Asmundr, and Sigurdr. Hlinik was the eldest of the brothers. As they grew up, the youths would often play and amuse themselves in the flowery grounds and beautiful gardens that were a short way from the palace of their father.

The old man and his old wife, in the wall-nook, had a daughter, alone of children, by name Thóra. She was early a maiden both hopeful and of brisk and forward dispositions, in spite of her being the offspring of cottagers. But as in the nook there was no young playmate for her, she found the stay there a dull one, and always contrived to be walking where the king's sons used to play, and sometimes joined them in their childish sports. She, however, always took good care to be modest and gentle, and always shewed the most amiable temper; for, although she met with some rough treatment, and was dealt harshly with by the king's sons, when they were all playing together, she never waxed angry or cross. On the contrary, she always tried to settle the dispute pleasantly when the children fell out or got angry. In the beginning, the king and queen saw with no satisfaction Thóra playing with their sons, but when they found out all her virtues, they cared no more about the matter. Therefore the carl's daughter was always with the king's sons, whenever she had any leisure. This led to Hlinik's becoming fond of her, and to her becoming no less fond of him, for she found that he was a worthy lad in every way. This mutual regard so increased with time, that they promised one another, at last, eternal love and faith. But of the parents being told of this, no mention is made. Now they lived to an upgrown age, when an event took place which filled all with astonishment, and many with grief and sorrow; this was the sudden disappearance of Hlinik, the king's son. But chiefly this caused deep sorrow to his parents, who had search made for him, wherever they could, but to no avail.

Thóra, the carl's daughter, was not to be comforted, knowing not what she should do. She had a foster-mother who was skilled in old arts, and knew much magic and other mysterious knowledge. Thóra at last went to her, and begged her to do her best for her in giving her news of the whereabouts of Prince Hlinik, and, if possible, how she might get to him.

The old woman groaned heavily, and said it was no trifle to accomplish the first part of the request, and still harder, the second, for the present whereabouts of the king's son was such as it was not easy to reach. She bade Thóra, however, come the next day, when she would try to do something towards helping her, or, at least, give her some news of the matter. At this, Thóra was greatly pleased, and did not, next day, delay her visit to the old woman. Then her foster-mother told her that trolls had stolen Hlinik away, and taken him to the under-world. There was one troll-woman, she said, who wanted to force him to marry her. When Thóra heard this, she was out of herself with sorrow and anxiety, and embracing her foster-mother, asked her to find some means of bringing her down to where Hlinik was, as she would try if there were no way to save him from the claws of this monster. At the bewailings and entreaties of Thóra, the old woman was greatly touched, and said: "There is no hiding the truth, that I am able to help you out of this strait; and as I am able, so I must do, although it is a sore loss for me to have to part with you, the more so as I have a foreboding that I shall see you nevermore."

Then the old woman went on to say, that she had a brown dog, which she should take with her.

"You shall follow the dog, wherever he goes," said the old woman, "and if darkness falls upon you while on your way, you shall take hold of his tail, in order never to be parted from him, however dark it may grow."

This talk over, Thóra received the dog, and foster-mother and foster-daughter parted in affection. After that, Thóra went off, following the dog. Having gone some way, they were overtaken by pitch-black darkness, and the carl's daughter took hold of the dog's tail, and thus walked after him. For a long while they went on, seeing nothing for the darkness. At last, they came to where it began to clear up, and slowly became full daylight around them. Soon they came to a great cave. They entered it, and went towards its farthest end, till they came to a door. The door was locked, but it opened before them of its own accord, for which Thóra thought she might have her foster-mother to thank. Within the door, they came to a room, in pretty neat order. There were only some few precious things in it, so they went on till they came to another door, which opened for them as the first one had done. Here they entered a splendid room, all covered over with gold, and jewels, and precious things of all sorts. Thóra saw Hlinik sleeping in a bright bed, with such a costly coverlet upon it that she had never seen its like before. Above the bed was hanging a wondrous sword which, thought the carl's daughter, must have marvellous virtues. She also saw there, three stones, one red, the other black, and the third white. These she took to be magic stones. Besides all this, a bird was sitting at the bedside. When Thóra had looked at these things, she tried to rouse Hlinik, but, try as she would, she could not wake him. She guessed therefore that there was some trick in the game, and so tried no longer to disturb him. Then she began looking about for some hiding-place for herself and the dog. At last she found a dark nook, and crept into it, keeping the dog with her. After a little while, she heard a great din and rumbling, and soon after, somebody said in the first cave: "Sister, you cook for us and prepare the meal, but I will go to Hlinik, the king's son, to try if he will yet marry me."

Thereupon, there came in this horrid monster, and going to Hlinik's bed where he lay sleeping, said:

"Sing, sing, my swans:
Awake, Hlinik, king's son."

When she had said this, the bird began to sing, and the king's son awoke. The troll now spoke many fair words to him about marrying her, but when she asked him if he would not do so, he gave her a sharp denial. She, however, stood there quiet with him, till the other troll brought in the meal, and, though the food was not over-spiced, or too savoury, it was so good that the king's son could eat of it with pleasure. After the meal was finished, the troll said:

"Sing, sing, my swans:
Sleep, Hlinik, king's son."

The king's son slept at once, and the trolls rushed out, slamming the doors after them. In the morning, they came in again, and woke Hlinik as before. The great troll asked him the same question as on the evening before,—whether he would not marry her. He refused to do so, as sharply as ever. Then they brought meals to him, as was their wont, and after the meal, the troll put him to sleep. Then both trolls rushed out, slamming the doors into the locks, after them.

Now the story comes again to Thóra, where she lay, with the dog, in the nook. She knew well that, in the daytime, the trolls were out hunting, wherefore she ventured to get up. She went to the bed and said the same words as she had heard the troll use to wake Hlinik with. The king's son awoke at once, and saw who had arrived, and, as you may guess, this was a meeting of joy and love. Greetings over, they talked about their ill-luck, and began to advise together, what to do. The prince told Thóra that the elder troll, the house-mother, wanted to marry him. She had, he said, when out witch-faring, caught him and brought him down hither; here he found his life a fearfully dismal one, but he had no means of escaping. Thóra began comforting him, and said: "To-night, you had better promise the troll to marry her, on condition that she shall tell you what are the powers of the bed-cover, the sword, and the stones. But if she will not yield to this, you must tell her that all these matters have therefore come to an end."

Hlinik found the advice good, and took it. When Thóra and he had thus spoken together till nightfall, and comforted each other, Thóra put him to sleep again, and went back to her nook, with the dog.

In the evening, when the troll-sisters came home, the elder came, as usual, first in, and awoke Hlinik. She then asked him, as formerly, if he would not marry her. Hlinik answered slowly, but at last, having made believe to think deeply, he said he would do so, if she would tell him the nature of the bed-cover, the sword, and the stones.

The troll was much startled at this request, but said she would tell him some of the properties of these things. He bade her tell him all or none. Now the troll had to choose one of two evils, and therefore chose, as she thought, the least. She said that the nature of the cover was, that it could take one up to the earth, or whithersoever one would. "But the nature of the sword is," she continued, "that it, alone of swords, can wound me and my brother Iron-head. No other steel can hurt us. The nature of the stones is, that when the red is struck, a fire issues from it that consumes everything; if you strike the white one, snow comes forth; but by striking the black one, rain is produced." She said too, that everyone on whom the issues from these stones fell, died at once, but particularly those who met the fire and lightenings from the red stone, except herself and her brother Iron-head, and those who could shield themselves with the coverlet.

When the troll had told all this, Hlinik said: "You sisters must go at once to-morrow, to bid your friends to the marriage-feast, which I would have held as soon as possible."

The troll thought this was very good advice, and said she would do all Hlinik bade her. After this, she ran into the front part of the cave, in roars of laughter from sheer joy, and in her trollish, outrageous manner, told her sister what had happened. Thereupon the sisters gave both such violent tokens of joy, that it seemed as if the cave was falling in; for though the youngest wanted also to marry the king's son, she could not help being glad of her sister's luck. Then the trolls went to rest, but were off at dawn the next morning, in order to bid people to the feast.

When Thóra was aware that the trolls had left, she lost no time in waking Hlinik. They then took as many of the costly things as they could carry, and all the magic things. This done, they started away, Hlinik, Thóra, and the dog. After a while, they saw the bidden guests flocking towards them, all giants, trolls, or mountaineers. To meet these fellows, Hlinik did not like, wherefore he began striking the stones. He then saw that the troll had spoken truly, for one heap after another of these folk fell to the earth. He struck the stones until he saw no one more approaching, and then continued his journey as before.

It is not told how long he and Thóra were on the way, but, after a while, they came home to the palace of the king, Hlinik's father. Thereupon there was greater joy than any words can tell. Hlinik related all that had come to pass, and how Thóra had delivered him from the hands of the trolls. Of this the parents of Hlinik were so glad that they determined upon the two being married immediately, for it was looked upon as a matter of course that Thóra should have the prince as a saving-reward.

The day before the marriage, the young lovers were walking outside the town, which stood on the sea side. They saw a vessel approaching, sailing up from the main, all gilt over, like flame, or the beaming sun. Then it was as if Hlinik was charmed in some strange way, and would, by all means, go down to the shore, to see who was on board of the ship. Thóra tried to dissuade him, and hinder him from going down, saying it was all some vain trickery. He tore himself from her embracings and ran down to the shore alone, as she would not go with him. When he came to the beach, he thought that the vessel was not so much to be admired as the lady on board it. Without asking her whence or who she was, the prince invited the strange maiden home to the palace, for he had fallen, at once, violently in love with her. She accepted the invitation, and went home to the palace with the king's son. In short, Hlinik forgot entirely his Thóra, and determined to marry this new and beautiful maiden, within a few days. Thóra was very sad on account of this, and the more so as she was sure that all was not natural. Soon after the stranger had appeared at the palace, the courtiers began to vanish, one after the other, nobody knowing what became of them.

Now Thóra laid a plot. She put on male attire, and went to see Asmundr, the king's son, and had an interview with him. She asked him when Hlinik's marriage with the strange lady was fixed. This she did in order to get the surest and truest news from the mouths of the king's sons themselves. He told her that the marriage was fixed for the next day. Then she went to Prince Sigurdr, and got the same answer. She asked him to get her an interview with Prince Hlinik, which Sigurdr promised her to do. Then Sigurdr, and Thóra disguised as a man, went to Prince Hlinik, and had an audience of him. He asked what they wanted, and said he had only a little time to waste upon such guests. Thóra, acting as an old man, said: "Small and trifling may be thought my errand, for it is but to ask you, prince, when you are going to marry your bride. But it is a very important thing for me to know the very time when it takes place." Hlinik had nearly resented this sauciness of the old man, but he told him, nevertheless, the truth. Then the old man asked if the prince had ever seen his bride alone, or watched her, when she thought she was seen by none. Hlinik answered that he could scarcely have better chances of seeing her than hitherto, although he had never seen her alone when she thought she was unobserved. The old man then requested the prince to come where they could watch her alone for a little while. Hlinik agreed to this, although he found the old man's request both very odd and slightly pert. Then they went to the room where the maiden was, and finding in the wall a rift, they watched her through it. Instead of seeing inside a beautiful maiden, they saw an awful hag of monstrous appearance, and heard her calling repeatedly: "Iron-head, brother, give me something to eat!" When she had said this, a three-headed giant came up through the floor with one of the king's courtiers. The hag seized upon the courtier, tore him to bits with her teeth, and gobbled him up, as a hungry dog a horse-carcass.

Now Hlinik and the old man went away, and the latter asked the prince how he was pleased with the sight, and if he did not find his bride a strangely queen-like person, and whether he did not wish he had been faithful to Thóra, the carl's daughter, who was now hidden, no one knew where; for she had left human companionship altogether, on account of the distress which his unmanly behaviour had caused her.

Hlinik was so disgusted at seeing his bride eating the man, that he could not reply wrathfully to the old man's raving and harsh rebukes, but was, on the contrary, sad and sorrowful. When the old man saw this, he asked if the prince would like him to find out Thóra. The prince brightened at this, and prayed him, by all means, to do so. This the old man was not long about, but going and changing clothes, became, at once, Thóra herself again. She returned thus to Hlinik, who received her with renewed love and affection. He told her all his unlucky charms, and how he had been under trollish and magic spells, and asked her what she thought would be the wisest thing for him now to do. Thóra gave him the rede that he should make believe to hold the marriage at the time already appointed by him; but she said she had with her the good sword from the cave, with which she had never parted, having long felt sure that it would be of good service at some time to come. Thóra bade Hlinik take it, and kill the troll with it.

"This," she said, "you must do yourself, for nobody but you would have courage or luck to accomplish the deed." She farther said that she doubted not, that the troll's beauty would make him change his mind at the moment when he ought to strike, and asked him, therefore, to allow her to come into the bridal-hall and sit at one side of him.

Hlinik took the sword, and promised to act as she had advised him.

The next day, the marriage-feast was held in the palace. Hlinik took his seat, and the bride was shewn to another by his side. But, shortly afterwards, Thóra came into the hall, in all her splendid royal attire, and, walking towards the end of the bridal-hall, took her seat at the other side of the bridegroom. At this all the assembly in the hall were greatly startled, but chiefly the bride, who at once changed colour. Then, before anyone knew what he would do, Hlinik stabbed the bride with the sword, and she fell head-foremost on to the floor, roaring loudly at the same time. And, at the same moment, the floor of the palace burst open, and up came a three-headed giant. This was Iron-head, the she-troll's brother. He threw over all the tables, and strode and leapt about the hall in a giant's mood, till Hlinik, running forward against him, dealt him a death-blow with the sword.

After this, the hall was put in order again, and a new bridal-feast was held, and Thóra told all how she had saved the king's son from the power of the troll-woman, and her brother, giant Iron-head. Thóra took the bridal-seat at the prince's side, and their marriage was celebrated with long and gleesome drinking and merry-making, and feasting of every sort. After the death of Hlinik's father, Hlinik ascended the throne, and he and queen Thóra lived long and happily. And more of this story we do not know.

THE STORY OF THORSTEINN, THE CARL'S SON.

THERE were once a king and queen who had twelve sons, whose names are not given. Not far from the dwelling of the king, there lived an old man and an old woman in the garden-nook, who had one son, by name Thorsteinn. He and the king's sons were of age at the time now told of.

One day, in fine weather, the king's sons went into the forest to kill birds and beasts. They had left their horses and walked far into the forest, and there came on now foul weather with pouring rain, so that they could not find their way back again to the horses, but, on the contrary, got farther and farther from them and from the right way. At last they came to a cave, high in the rocks. Here they saw a huge troll-woman, dark and savage-looking, and beside her, eleven younger troll-women, and a twelfth maiden who seemed human in looks. The troll received the king's sons well, and begged them to stay there, and they fain accepted the offer, for the weather was bad, and they were both hungry and sleepy. Shortly, the old troll brought meals to them, and they ate as they lusted. When they had taken their meal, and the old troll chanced to be out of the way, the maiden said to them: "As you see, you have fallen into the hands of trolls, nor are you the first whom the old troll has charmed hither, and killed, in order to obtain their money." She further said to them: "The troll will make you sleep, one with each of her daughters, and one also with me; and I sleep innermost of them all in the cave. But when she believes that you are all asleep, the old woman will get down, and fetch a light and a sword, and chop off each one of your heads, on the edge of the bed." She told them, therefore, that they should play her a trick, by cutting off the hair of the troll-women when they were fast asleep, and taking their caps, and changing place with them in the bed, putting them next to the edge, but sleeping themselves next to the wall, with their caps on their heads. This change in the beds she thought the troll would not find out, and would thus cut off the heads of her daughters, instead of those of her guests. But when the troll had got to the innermost bed, they must get up, the maiden said, and prevent the troll from cutting her head off. She declared, too, that the troll had stolen her, she being a king's daughter, from another kingdom, in order to serve her and her children.

Hereupon the trolls came into the cave, and the old troll asked the king's sons to go to bed, saying that she had just so many beds as would allow one to sleep with each of her daughters. They accepted the offer, and went to bed. After that the troll-women and the maiden went to bed with the princes, the latter, however, very sadly. The trolls soon slept, and the king's sons began working upon their heads, and cutting their hair off, in their sleep; and then, putting on their caps, changed places in bed with them. But they kept good watch, and did not fall asleep. When the night was advanced, the old troll got down and walked into the front cave, but soon returned, with a light in one hand and a mighty sword in the other. She put the light down on the floor of the cave, and striding up to the first bed with the drawn sword, seized upon the head of her troll daughter, whom she took for a guest, and cut her head off on the edge of the bed, and the head rolled along the cave-floor. After this, she cut off the heads of her daughters, one after the other, all lying next to the edge of the bed, till she came to the innermost bed. Then all the king's sons leapt up, and rushing at the troll, felled her. She now saw, too late, that they had baffled her, and that she had chopped off the heads of her daughters instead of the heads of her guests, and she guessed that this must have been a plot arranged between the maiden and the king's sons. In this state, not being able to defend herself, she laid the curse and spell upon the brothers, that they should become oxen, and should go home to the palace of the king, their father, in that ox-shape, every day, and never get rid of it, except once in one sun-circle, just while they had their meals: but these they should take on an island, in a large lake, far from all human dwellings. Of this spell they should never be quit, till some man was found, so active, that he could bring them the same meals to eat at home in their father's kingdom, as they were wont to eat on the island. But on the maiden she laid the spell, that she should always pour water between two wells, from one into the other, not far from the lake, and pay no heed to aught else. From this spell she should never be freed, until somebody could steal behind her without her knowledge, and trip her suddenly up. "But," said she, "both will happen late." After this, the king's sons killed her, and burnt her to cold cinders, and then turned homewards with the maiden, under the power of the spell.

Now must we tell, that the king began to wonder at the long time his sons delayed their return, as they did not come either on the next day, or the next night, after their departure. He then gathered many people together, and had a thorough search made for them, for a long while. But it was all in vain, and thus the search was given up, albeit the king was in deep sorrow.

Now, as time went on, people noticed that twelve oxen came every day, home to the king's palace, snuffling about all over the place. They shewed no wish to hurt anybody, nor did anyone do them any harm. The king was much concerned with this strange thing, and had food of all sorts offered to these oxen, but they would touch nothing, and after a short stay, they used always to go away as quietly as they had come, and always at the same time.

It is now to be told that Thorsteinn, the carl's son, in garden-wall-nook, heard from other folk of the disappearance of the king's sons, and of the strange way in which the twelve oxen came every day to the king's palace, and he was mightily eager to find out all about it. He therefore asked his parents to allow him to go before the king and crave a winter-stay at his court, for he found his life in the wall-nook a dull one indeed. This they granted, and Thorsteinn went before the king and asked leave to stay at his court for the winter. The king would know why he asked for this. Thorsteinn said he wanted to see the customs of other people, for his own improvement, whereas in wall-nook his life was a dull one. The king then granted him a winter-stay, and Thorsteinn, accordingly, took up his place at the court. He often spoke to the king of the disappearance of his sons, and of what could have become of them. But that always caused great grief to the king, and he always drew back from any talk on that matter. Then Thorsteinn asked about these twelve oxen, what the king thought of them. The king said he knew nothing about them, but that he found it strange that they should turn their steps thither every day; and he added that he would reward anyone well, who could discover whence they came. Now Thorsteinn made up his mind to look more sharply into this affair of the oxen, and one day, when they turned back from the palace, he followed them. But so quick did they run, that he, in running after them, had wellnigh burst the blood-vessels in his lungs, and had flung aside all the clothes he could strip off. At last the oxen came to a lake, and plunged into it, swimming towards the island, all but the last one: it delayed a little at the shore as if it were waiting for Thorsteinn, but the others swam off to the lake-island. When Thorsteinn arrived at the lake, the last ox signed to him to mount on its back, which he did. , The ox then sped off to a hall which was standing in the holm. When Thorsteinn came to the hall, he saw twelve ox-shapes lying outside the door. But within, twelve men were sitting at table. Thorsteinn easily guessed that these were the king's sons, enchanted by some evil fiend. He went into the hall, but neither did he speak to them, nor did they speak to one another. They gave him from their meals both bread and wine, but he kept it without tasting it.

When they had dined, they took again their ox-shapes and swam across the lake, the last one remaining somewhat behind till Thorsteinn mounted it, when it swam with him, over to the land-shore. When on the mainland again, the oxen ran nimbly away hither and thither, Thorsteinn seeing no more traces of them. Then he went on for a while, until he saw a woman pouring, as fast as ever she could, water from one well into another. And to judge from the look of her one would not have taken her, nevertheless, for a madwoman. She paid no attention to Thorsteinn approaching her, and thus he ran up to her from behind, and threw her to the ground. Then it was as if a feeling of numbness crept through all her body, and she moved neither limb nor joint. Thorsteinn took water from one of the wells, and sprinkled it over her. She recovered soon, and thanked Thorsteinn with many fair words for her deliverance from this hard spell. She told him all her former life, as also, all about the oxen, and that they would never be quit of their curse, till they received from a human being, the same food as they were wont to eat in the holm, when they threw off their ox-shapes. After this, she and Thorsteinn returned home, he taking her to wall-nook and begging his parents to keep her a while for him, and to take good heed to do her neither harm nor hurt. Then he went to the court, and was very short-spoken about his journey.

Next day, when the oxen came, Thorsteinn was walking where he expected them, and offered them both the bread and the wine he had received from them, the day before in the hall, and they all tasted both. Having eaten and drunk, they all fell to the ground, and the ox-shapes slipped off them. Then Thorsteinn sent for the king, and asked him if he knew the men that were lying yonder. He said that he knew them for his sons, and they were forthwith sprinkled with water, and quickened to life. A joyful meeting ensued between the king and the princes, and anon Thorsteinn fetched the princess from the lodgings in the garden-nook, and she and the princes told the king all their mishaps, and how Thorsteinn had saved them from these spells. After that, the king held a banquet to celebrate this joyful finding again of his sons, and the princess's safety: and at this banquet, Thorsteinn wooed the princess, who readily said Yea.

Then was the banquet turned into a marriage-feast for Thorsteinn and the princess, and the king bade them stay with him as long as ever they would, for he deemed himself indebted to both for the lives and delivery of his sons. The princes then declared that they would give up all their claim to the kingdom after the death of their father, in favour of Thorsteinn and the princess, as a token of their gratitude for being saved and freed by them. To this the king agreed, and after his death, Thorsteinn ascended the throne and ruled that kingdom, with his queen, in peace and prosperity. Since that, few stories have been told of them.

CARL'S SON, LITTLE, TRITTLE, AND THE BIRDS

THERE were once a king and queen in their palace, and an old man and woman in the nook of the garden wall. The king had a daughter of whom he was very fond. But, to his distress, his daughter was lost, and nowhere could she be found, in spite of a diligent search being made for her. Then the king made a vow, that whosoever found her, and brought her to him, should have her for a wife. But, although many tried to gain such a match, the king's daughter was not found, and searchers came empty-handed home, as they had left.

Now it must be told of the old man, that he had three sons. He made much of the two eldest, but the youngest was treated as an elbow-child, both by his father and his brothers. When the carl's sons were of age, the eldest brother once said to his father, that he would go abroad in search of fame and wealth. His parents gave their consent to this, and he left home with provisions and new shoes, and walked long, long, and far. At last he came to a mound. There he sat down to rest, and took forth his knapsack and began to eat. Soon after, there came to him a tiny old carl, and asked him for something to eat. The youth refused to give him anything, and drove him off as he had come. Afterwards, he went on, a long, long way, till he came to another mound, where he sat down to eat. And while he was eating, there came to him a queer, little, wee old man, and asked him for something to eat. But the carl's son refused him, and drove him off with foul words. Yet again walked on the youth, till he came to an open space in a wood, where he sat down to eat. And while he was eating there, there came to him a large flock of birds, quite close up to him. He waxed angry with the birds, and drove them away from him. He went on still farther yet, till he came to a large cave, into which he went, but saw no human being. He then made up his mind to wait until the cave-dwellers came in. In the later part of the day, a fearfully large she-troll came into the cave. He asked her for shelter for that night. She said she would give it, if he would perform, on the morrow, the work which she would give him to do.

He said, Yes. Thus he was in the cave through the night. In the morning, the troll bade him shovel out the cave, and have the work finished in the evening; if not, she said she would kill him. And thereupon she went away.

Now the cottager's son seized the spade, and began to shovel, but when he put it down for the first time, it became fixed to the cave-floor, so that he could not move it. In the evening, when the troll returned home, the cave was unshovelled, as you may fancy; without making any ado, she instantly took the carl's son and killed him; and therefore, henceforth, he is out of the story.

Now turns the tale home, to the old couple's cottage. The second son next asked them to give him leave to go abroad, in search of fame and wealth. He said he could not be content with staying longer in his dull home, when his brother had already, most likely, risen to some high post, in some king's service. His parents allowed him to go away, and provided him with all things needful for the journey.

To cut his story short, he fared in every way as his brother had fared before him.

Now the youngest of the brothers was yet left. But he was in no favour with his parents for being left alone with them. He asked therefore their leave to go away. "I am not going in search of fame and wealth," he said, "but only in order to find something to do for my support, that I may no longer be a burden to you, as I now am."

The old man and woman, his parents, consented to this, and gave him a tolerably good store of provisions, and new shoes, but all his outfit was far from being as good as that of his brothers. Now he went away, and chanced to take the same road as his brothers had before trodden, on leaving home. He came to the first mound and said: "Here my brothers have rested themselves, and I shall do so too." He then sat down to eat, and the little, tiny old man came to him, and asked him for something to eat. The youth received him well, and bade him sit down and eat as he lusted.

When they had eaten enough, the tiny old man said: "Call me when you are in some tiny need; my name is Trittle." And so saying the little manikin toddled away and disappeared. The carl's son went on till he came to the other mound. Then said he: "Here my brothers have rested themselves, and I shall do so too." He began eating, and while he was eating, a wee, little old man came to him and asked him for something to eat. The carl's son answered well his wish, and bade him sit down and eat with him, as much as he wanted. When they had eaten enough, the carl said: "Call me when you are in some little need; my name is Little." And so saying, he toddled away and disappeared. Now the carl's son went on, till he came to the open space in the wood. Then he said: "My brothers have rested here before, and I will do so too." Thereupon he sat down, and began to eat. Then came to him a mighty large flock of birds, who behaved round him most starvingly. He rubbed a piece of bread between his hands, and strewed the crumbs amongst the birds, who picked them up and ate them. When they had finished the bread-crumbs, one of the birds said: "Call us when you are in some little strait, and call us your birds." And thereupon they flew away and disappeared. But the carl's son went on, till he came to the cave, as his brothers had done before him. He went in, but saw no living being there, only the dead bodies of his brothers hanging from the roof of the cave, a little way within the door. This he thought no over pleasant sight, but made up his mind, nevertheless, to wait for the cave-dweller. A short time passed until a huge troll, the owner of the cave, of whom we have spoken before, came in. The carl's son asked for a shelter, for the night. She said he should have it, if he would do whatsoever she bade him do. He agreed to this, and thus he was in the cave, through the night. Next morning the troll bade him shovel out the cave, and if he had not finished his work in the evening, when she came back, she said she would kill him, at once, on her return. Then she strode away. The carl's son seized the shovel, and was beginning to shovel out the cave, but no sooner had he thrust the spade down to the floor, than it stuck fast in it, and was not to be moved. Now the youth was in despair, and called out in his trouble: "My Trittle, come hither!" At the same moment Trittle came in, and asked the carl's son what he wanted. The other told him into what straits he was brought. Then Trittle said: "Stick, mattock! Shovel out, spade!" Then the mattock stuck and the spade shovelled, and, in a short time, the cave was well shovelled and neatly cleaned. This done, Trittle went away. But in the evening, when the she-troll came home, and saw all that had been done, she said to the carl's son: "You are not alone at work, carl, carl! Why, yes, let it be good!"

Now they slept quietly through that night. In the morning, she bade him air her bed-clothes, take all the feathers out of the beds, spread them in the sun to dry them, and then put them into the beds again. But if one single feather was wanting in the evening, she said she would most assuredly kill him. She then left him. The carl's son spread out the bed-clothes. In the troll's bedstead there were three feather-beds, and as the weather was perfectly calm, he ripped the seams of them, and spread out the feathers in the sun. But, when he least looked for it, a gust of a whirlwind came, and whirled all the feathers into the air, so that he saw not one feather of them left. This, the carl's son did not quite enjoy, and in his trouble he cried: "My Trittle, my Little, and all my birds, come hither!" Then came Trittle, and Little, and all the flock of birds, bringing all the feathers with them. And Trittle, and Little, and all the birds aided the carl's son in putting the feathers into the beds, and in sewing them together again. They took one feather from each bed, and bound them together, and told the carl's son that he should stick them into the troll's nose, if she missed them. Then Trittle, Little, and the birds left him. When the troll came home in the evening, she flung herself down on to the bed so heavily, that all the whole cave cracked Then she handled the beds, and turned to the carl's son, saying: "Now will I kill you, for from each bed there is one feather missing." He therefore took forth from his pocket the three feathers, and stuck them into her nose, and said: "There! take them, they are all there." The troll took them, and said: "You are not alone at work, carl, carl! Why, yes, let it be good as it is."

Now the carl's son passed that night also in the cave. In the morning, the troll said to him that, to-day he should slaughter her ox, cook the entrails, shave the hide, and make spoons out of the horns; and have all this done by her return in the evening. She said that she had fifty oxen, but only wanted one of them killed, and that he must tell for himself which of them that was. "If you have finished all this ere nightfall," quoth the hag, "you may go to any quarter of the land you like, for all that I care, and besides, choose out of my property any three things you like. But, if anything happens to be undone, or if you take the wrong ox, I shall kill you."

When the troll had thus spoken to the carl's son, she went away, and left him to his own despair, and he stood there, not knowing, in the least, what to do.

However, he called out loud, in his troubles: "My Trittle, my Little, come ye both!" He then saw the tiny old men coming towards him, leading between them a huge ox. They killed it immediately, and the carl's son set himself to cook the entrails, Little to make the spoons, and Trittle to shave the hide. The work went off quickly, and in due time was all done. The carl's son told the tiny old men what the troll had promised him, if he should have finished the work by the evening. The old fellows then said that he could choose what was above her bed, the chest that she had standing at the side of her bed, and whatever stood under the wall of the cave. This the carl's son promised to do. After this, the old men went their way, and the youth bade them farewell with many thanks. In the evening, when the troll came home, and saw that the carl's son had done everything to her satisfaction, she said: "You are not alone at work, carl, carl! Why, yes, let it be good as it is." Then she paid him the reward. That which was above the bed was the king's lost daughter. The great chest at the bedside was full of gold and precious things. But that which stood under the cave-wall was a ship, thoroughly fitted out, with rigging and all, which had the strange power of going of its own accord, whithersoever one liked.

When the troll had given this reward to the carl's son, she took leave of him, saying that he would be the luckiest of men, and then went off as she was wont. The carl's son now carried the chest on board the ship, and went himself on board, together with the king's daughter. He gave the sails to the wind, and sailed home to the king, the princess's father. He restored his daughter to the king, and told him all about his travels. The king much marvelled at the strange adventures of the carl's son, and received his daughter with great joy, as one may fancy. The king held a great welcome-banquet for his daughter and her deliverer, and the banquet ended with the marriage of the king's daughter to the carl's son, who first became the king's commander and first-minister. But after the death of his father-in-law, he inherited all the kingdom, and governed it afterwards, both long and well, till the date of his death. And there is our story at an end.

THE TALE OF HOW THREE DAMSELS WENT TO FETCH FIRE.

THERE dwelt once an old man and old woman, in their cottage near the sea, but far away from all peopled parts of the land. They had three daughters, the eldest named Ingibjörg, the second Sigridr, and the youngest Helga. The eldest daughters were great pets, but the youngest the parents visited their spite upon, although she was, in every way, better than her sisters. Helga was not trusted to do anything, for the parents always said that she was a good-for-nothing girl; and therefore, her only work was to wait upon the family, and run about for them

Once it so happened that the fire in the cottage went out, and it was a mighty long way that one had to go to fetch fire. Ingibjörg, therefore, was sent away to fetch the fire. She started, and when she had walked for a while, she passed a mound, in which she heard a voice saying: "Which do you like to have me,—with you, or against you?" Ingibjörg, thinking that this was addressed to herself, said: "It matters not; I care not, in the least, which you are." Then she went on, till she came to a cave, where she saw fire enough. On the hearth there was standing a kettle, full of half-cooked meat. She also saw some unbaked flat-breads in a trough by the hearth. But not one person did she see, or any living being. Now Ingibjörg was rather hungry after the long walk, wherefore she kindled as big a fire as she possibly could, under the kettle, in order to get the meat quicker done, and baked the flat-breads at the same time. One of these she baked well for herself, but the others she burnt, so that they could not be eaten. After that she took of the meat for herself, without any delicacy. While she was eating, a fearful big dog came to her, and went wagging round her, as if asking her for something to eat. But she gave him a kick instead of meat, which so roused the savage beast, that he bit off her hand. Ingibjörg was so frightened, that she dared stay no longer, but left without fire, and came home to her cottage, and told her mishap, and the whole family wondered not a little at such a strange adventure.

Although it was now deemed no pleasure-trip, nor even an easy matter, to fetch the fire, yet it was decided that the second pet-child, Sigridr, should go to fetch the much-wanted fire. This the old parents settled, because they feared that, if the youngest was sent, she would run away, most likely, and never shew herself again, as she had but few pleasures and less kindness to part from; and if things should so happen, they saw that there would be nobody left at home to put their spite upon, or who would be as a slave to them and the sisters. For this reason, Sigridr was sent, and not Helga.

Now, to use few words, we may tell that it fared with Sigridr entirely as with her sister, save only that the big dog in the cave took leave of her by biting off her nose. She came, therefore, home again to the cottage, noseless and fireless.

Now the old man and his wife were quite out of themselves with anger, and in their rage, ordered the outcast, Helga, to go her way, as, indeed, it was only pain to them to have her before their eyes. They bade her bring back the fire.

So Helga went her way, and came to the mound, as had done her sisters before her. Then she heard some one inside it say: "Will you have me with you, or against you?" Helga answered: "It is a common saying, that nothing is so bad, as not to be better with one than against one. But not knowing whether you are so bad, I will fain have you with me!"

She then went on, till she came to the same cave as her sisters had reached before her. When she entered it, it was all in the same state as ever. But Helga used another way of proceeding than that of her sisters. She cooked the meat in the kettle, and baked the flat-breads well and carefully, without even tasting the meal, although she was very hungry, the scrapings and dirty slops that she had been fed with at home no longer satisfying her craving stomach. Neither would she take the fire, before she had the leave of the cave-owner. And as she was quite faint with weariness, she made up her mind to rest there and wait for the master; but all around her was so huge in size and look, that she sat down and looked about her, with fear and awe.

While she was thinking where she should fling herself down, she heard great rumblings, as if the cave were going to fall in. And she soon saw entering it, a huge giant, fearfully ugly, accompanied by a great and savage-looking dog. She was dreadfully frightened. But she plucked up a little courage when the giant spoke to her kindly, and said: "You have done well, and performed carefully what was needed here, wherefore it is just that you should receive some reward for your trouble, and dine with me, and rest yourself here to-night, whether you sleep with my dog or with myself."

Then the giant brought food for Helga, who eat as much of it as she wanted. After that, she lay down in the dog's lair, for, frightful as the dog was, the giant was ten times more so. When Helga had lain a little while, she heard such a terrible thump, that the cave all trembled. She was very much frightened at this, and the giant called out to her, saying: "If you are afraid, Helga, carl's daughter, you may creep up on to the footstool at my bedside." She did so, but soon there came another thundering thump, worse, by far, than the first one. Then the giant offered Helga to let her sit on his bed, if she liked. She accepted the offer. Soon came a third and far louder thump than the first ones. Then said the giant, that Helga should come into the bed, and sit at his feet. But, no sooner was she there, than a fourth crash came, so violent, that everything cracked, as if the cave were going to burst down. Then the giant bade Helga come and lie down at his side; and in her deadly despair she did so gladly. And, in the same moment, the giant's shape fell off, and Helga saw a young and beautiful prince resting in the bed at her side. She did not delay an instant, but seized the troll's-shape and burnt it to ashes. Then the king's son thanked Helga, with great affection, for having released him from this loathsome spell. And thus they slept quietly in the cave, the rest of that night. Next morning, the prince told Helga all about his life, of the spell that had been laid on him, of his wealth, family and kingdom. He promised to fetch her, later, if she would agree to marry him, and you may guess quite well, how readily the poor carl's daughter complied with the prince's wish. She then told him all about herself, of her errand, and of her sisters' missions. On his departure, the prince gave Helga a tunic, and bade her wear it under her clothes, letting nobody see it. He also gave her a chest, with all sorts of precious things in it, and two beautiful dresses. He bade her not hide the chest, but shew it, as it would, most likely, be taken from her, when she got home. When Helga was ready to start, the dog came to her, and gave her its fore-paw, upon which was a beautiful ring, which Helga also took. After this, the king's son and the carl's daughter took an affectionate leave of one another, and Helga made all haste home, with the tunic, the chest, and the fire, not a little light in heart.

She took the fire into the cottage, and fain were the carl and his old wife to have once more fire in the house. But when Helga shewed them the chest, and the fine things in it, they were all taken from her, and her parents and sisters were glad enough to have these costly ornaments for themselves. Of the tunic, however, no one knew a whit.

Now time passed on, and nothing of note came to pass in the cottage, until, one day, a vessel was seen sailing up from the main, and a stately vessel it was. It anchored opposite the cottage, and the old man went down to the shore, for he was curious to know who was the master of it. He spoke to the master, but neither did he know him, nor did the other tell who he was. The stranger was very inquisitive, and wanted to know, amongst other things, how many people lived in the cottage, and how many children the carl had. The old man said that, in his cottage, there were only himself, his old wife, and two daughters of theirs. The stranger asked to be allowed to see the daughters, and the carl said he was welcome. He now fetched his daughters, who made their appearance in the fine clothes that formerly were in the chest. The stranger told the old man he liked his daughters much, but asked why one had her hand in her bosom, and the other her handkerchief over her nose. They were obliged, willing or unwilling, to shew the cause of this. The stranger thought their beauty greatly impaired by this, but could not get them to tell him how it had been brought about. Next he asked of the old man, if it was quite true that he had not more daughters than these two. This the old man declared at first to be true, but when the other began to press him more about it, he said he had a creature which he knew not whether to regard as a human-being or a monster. The stranger asked to see her; and the old man then went for Helga, and brought her back with him, dirty as she was, and in ragged clothes. But when she came, the stranger tore off her rags, and lo! she came forth in a shining tunic, far finer than the dresses of her sisters. At this sudden change, all the others stood dumb with astonishment. Then the stranger turned to another style of speech, and scolded sharply the parents and sisters for their unnatural treatment of Helga. He stripped the elder sisters of their state attire, saying it was stolen, and flung to them the rags of Helga, telling them all their story, and who he was. Leaving behind the carl and the elder sisters, he took Helga, and sailed away with her into his own kingdom, where he married her. They loved each other long and well, had children and children's children, and prospered till death. And farther this story is not known to us.

A GIANT TRICKED.

ONCE there were in a cottage an old man and his wife, who had three daughters. The eldest was hight Signy, the second Asa, and the youngest Helga. The elder sisters led a blissful life, compared with that of Helga, for they were much petted by their parents, and every fault of theirs was either pardoned or praised, when it came to their parents' ears. Helga, on the contrary, had little cause to rejoice over her parents' love for her, for she had to do all the worst work, and everything that the old wife found above her strength; she had to do all the hard labour at home, take care of the kitchen and cookery, clean everything, and put all in order in the cottage. The elder sisters did not even look to these things, but sat in the house, on the dais, like court-dames, all the winter, and basked in the sun all the summer; they dressed gaudily, and did nothing but make themselves look as pretty as they could. They regarded Helga with envious eyes; for, although she was dressed in rags, and was forced to attend to the hardest and dirtiest work, and had only the ash-filled hearth for her bed, everyone found her the nicest looking of them all, and this was a sore pang to her sisters.

Once there came a man, of fine looks, nobly dressed, and asked for the hand of Signy. The old man and his wife liked the man, and Signy not less, and as the match was found promising, all the folk concerned in the matter consented to the stranger's request. The man then walked off with Signy at once. But, when they had gone a short way from the cottage, the man suddenly changed his appearance, and became a three-headed giant. He then said to Signy: "Which would you like me to do,—to carry you, or to drag you?" Signy chose what she liked best, that he should carry her. He made her sit upon one of his heads, and thus carried her home to his cave. There he put her into an underground cellar, and tying her hands behind her back, walked off from her, and locked the place.

Soon after this, there came a man to the cottage and wooed Asa. He was well-dressed, and noble and manly-looking, and as both parents and Asa liked him, consent was given to his wooing the maiden. The man went away with his bride at once. When they had gone a short way from the cottage, the man changed his appearance, and became an awful three-headed giant, and put the same choice before Asa, as he had formerly put before Signy, her sister; and all their dealings together came to the same issue as those between the giant and Signy.

For the third time, a man came to the carl's cottage, and asked for Helga's hand. A manly and hopeful-looking bridegroom he seemed to be. The old man and his wife told the man not to mention such a thing; "for now," they said, "we have no daughter to give away, having married those we had." But the man pressed them the more, the more they denied having a yet-unmarried daughter. At last they said that they had still a daughter, but they could not fancy anyone so void of taste as to fall in love with her; for, in the first place she was hideously ugly, and secondly, the dirtiest and most slovenly pig that moved on the earth. The man was yet more eager than before, to woo her, and prayed them to let him see her. Then Helga was fetched from the kitchen and shewn to the stranger, and he prayed them to refuse him no longer their daughter's hand. The carl and his old wife then said he might marry their daughter, if it was his will, but Helga's answer or consent nobody mentioned. The man went away with her, and, after they had walked a short way from the cottage, was turned ints a giant, as before, and put the same choice before her as before her sisters; she chose that he should drag her, and of their travelling nothing more is told, till he came to the cave with her, when he said: "Now you shall undertake the housekeeping here, sweep the cave and clean it, cook my meals, wait upon me, and make my bed."

For a long time, therefore, Helga took care of all the housekeeping of the cave, during the day; waiting upon the giant, morning and evening, for all the rest of the day he was out hunting and fishing, and carried his spoil and draught home to the cave in the evening, and then took his meals without any ceremony. Before he went off in the morning, he took all forth for her of which she might be in need in the daytime. She noticed that the giant always went alone about his store-rooms and other locked-up places, never allowing Helga to see what he had, and always carrying away the keys with him when he went from the cave. The only living being in the cave, of whom Helga knew, was a little dog belonging to her. She observed that he used to disappear from her when she was busy or did not pay attention to him, but when she called him, he used to come to her after a little delay, whence she concluded that he must be wont to go far into the cave. Once she went to explore the cave herself, and came to a locked door, before which the dog was lying. She peeped through the keyhole in the lock, and thought she saw within two women sitting in one chair. It then suddenly came across her mind, that these might be her sisters, and she found it a hard thing, if she were not mistaken, to know that they were there, so harshly dealt with, although they had not treated her formerly any better than they might have done.

In the evening, when the giant came home, Helga was very talkative and busy about him while he sat at his supper. Amongst other things, she asked him how far he was satisfied with her care of the cave; he said that was all right enough. She then went farther, and asked him how he liked her. He answered that he could not help saying he was very fond of her, and it was just therefore that he had fetched her away from home, knowing what sort of woman she was. Helga said: "If you had thought any lot better fitting for me than that of being your slave, you would not have distrusted my going about all parts of your cave, or having charge of your store-rooms, that I might enjoy the charms of your wealth with you. But you lock up all for me, and put in my hand, in portions measured by yourself, what I have to use, thus grudging me free entrance to your property." The giant said that it was true that he had not given her the keys; "but this," he continued, "I did to try you. Now I shall no longer hide from you, that it is my intention soon to marry you, and from this hour you shall take these keys of all my store-rooms, and of every door in the house. But I warn you strongly not to open a certain door in the cave, although you have got in the bunch the key to it. This door," (beckoning towards the door she had already looked through), "must not be opened, if you love your own life."

Helga took the bunch of keys, and said: "You have done well, giant, as you have shewn that you are not going to dishonour me in any way, and that you trust me with free and unhindered charge of your things, and allow me free entrance to your locked-up store-rooms; indeed, the time is approaching, when I need to be thoroughly acquainted with your household affairs, more than I hitherto have been. But as you say that you are going to marry me within a short while, I certainly think it wiser to put the cave in order, and furbish it up, in order to have it prepared for the feast. And I will begin my work to-morrow."

Then they went to their beds, and slept through the night. Next day, the old giant went away, as was his wont, but Helga began examining his things. When she had done this, she went to the door to which the dog had been used to go, and tried in the lock the only key that was left in the bunch, and it at once opened the door. When she entered, she found her sisters starving, and thin, and nearly dying. She unbound them and refreshed them as far as she could. Then they told her what sort of life they had led with the giant, how he had tried to force them to marry him, and, on their refusing, had thrust them into this out-cave, and given them just enough food to keep them alive.

Then said Helga: "Now is there need of a speedy rede and a speedy deed, if all shall go off smoothly. I am determined to deliver you from your misery. and get you away from here, whatever my fate may be afterwards. I will put you in a sack, wrapped in fish-skins and other leavings of the giant's meals, and will bid him carry the sack home to our father and mother."

So she took a large sack, and put her sisters into it, and packed all round them the leavings from the giant's meals, and then set up the sack, leaning against the wall of the cave.

When the giant came home in the evening, Helga was very sullen and gloomy. The giant asked her very gently, what ailed her. She said that two things were the cause of this: firstly, she was very tired after the toil of the day; and secondly, she knew that her parents had nothing in the house to eat, while she was living here in plenty of every kind.

The giant felt for her, when she had thus bewailed herself for a while, and comforted her by saying, that it was an easy thing to find some remedy for that.

Helga said: "I have been thinking to-day, how you might, with the least loss to yourself, relieve my needy parents. I think that the leavings from your meals would be no great loss to you, as they have been lying, strewed all over the floor of the cave, like lopped branches, until now, when I have gathered them together and put some of them into yon sack; and if that sack was well at my parents' disposition now, it would be a great store for them. But now the sack has waxed so heavy, that I cannot lift it at all, although it contains only a tithe of your leavings. Now, I hope you will, for my words, carry the sack home to Carl's-cot, to-morrow, in order both to relieve my parents, and to free me from the sad bother I have had in looking after your leavings. But I forbid you either to open the sack, or to touch anything in it. You need not fancy that I shall not know if you trespass against this command;

For keen is the sight of my eye, as it sees
Through hill, and knoll, and my cave, with ease!

So if you should do otherwise than I have bidden you, do not think of ever marrying me."

The giant said he would do all that was agreeable to her will, and added: "To-morrow, you shall prepare all for our marriage."

He then shewed her everything he would have for the marriage-feast; and Helga found the things that he would have at the banquet rather of a large size, and trollish in quantity. Amongst other things, he took forth a bundle, undid it, and took from it marriage-attire for Helga, which he wished her to don when she had prepared everything for the feast, that there might be no delay when the guests arrived; for, on returning from her parents, he would, he said, go and bid the wedding-guests. Helga promised that everything should be ready when the bidden-folk came, and made believe to be very eager for the speedy sealing of their union. After this, they left off talking and went to their beds.

Next morning, the giant was early up. He took the sack, put it on his back, and went away cottage-ward with it. When he was some way from the cave, he put the sack down, finding it wonderfully heavy, and rested himself a little. As soon as he had put down the sack, one of the sisters said:

"Mind the eye of Helga, that sees
Through hill, and knoll, and her cave, with ease!"

Now the giant thought that Helga saw all he was about, and said:

"Oh, no! I must not pry into this sack,—
Not even if beneath it my spine should crack;
For keen is the eye of my Helga: she sees,
Through hill, and knoll, and cave, with ease."

After this, he took the sack on his back, and went onwards. But, a second time, he got tired, and finding the sack strangely heavy, he put it down. But then he heard:

"Mind the eye of Helga, that sees
Through hill, and knoll, and cave, with ease!"

And answering in the same words as before, he went on. It was the same story over again when he rested for the third time. At last he got to Carl's-cot, and gave the sack to the old cottage couple.

Now we must tell how Helga cleaned the cave, and put all in order, preparing for the marriage-feast. She made the greatest haste she could, and had the tables all spread, with everything on them that ought to be there. Having finished all this, she took the trunk of a tree, that stood in the cave, and dressed it in her own marriage-attire, and put it where she thought her seat would be. Then she smeared her face all over with pot-soot, threw coal-dust and ashes over all her dresses, took the poker, using it as a horse, and sat on it, and rode away. She had gone but a short way, before she met the giant at the head of a large troop of guests, trolls, and rock-giants. He accosted Helga, and asked her what was her name. She said that her name was Coal-face poker-riding. He asked again:

"Rider of the poker,
Black as sooty stoker,
Did'st thou not call
At Mealshead, at all?"

She answered:

"I past, in my riding,
That place of abiding,
And saw the whole feat:
The tables were beamingly
Dressed,—and beseemingly
The bride kept her seat.
The goblets were glowing
With wine overflowing
For wedding so meet."

Then said the giant:

"Ho, ho! let us ride!
Fast let us ride
Onwards to my waiting bride!"

Then all the guests answered in chorus:

"Swains, let us ride!
Fast let us ride
Onwards to his waiting bride!"

After that, Helga parted with them, and soon met another troop. In that, there were troll-women only, and ogresses. They accosted her as the giant had done:

"Rider of the poker,
Black as sooty stoker,
Did'st thou not call
At Mealshead, at all?"

She answered:

"I past, in my riding,
That place of abiding,
And saw the whole feat:
The tables were beamingly
Dressed,—and beseemingly
The bride kept her seat.
The goblets were glowing
With wine overflowing
For wedding so meet.

Then cried the trolls:—

"Lasses, let us ride!
Fast let us ride
Onwards to the waiting bride!"

After that Helga parted with them. The trolls went on to the cave of Mealshead, but Helga turned, as soon as a hillock hid her from view, towards Carl's-cot, and told her parents and sisters how matters stood. She remained at home a little while only, and then went away, to spy how things got on at Mealshead.

Now turns the story to the giant and his guests. When they came to the cave, they saw tables spread, and benches set, and all ready for the merry feast. They also saw the bride in her seat, and all stepped up to her, in order to greet her, and wish her joy of her luck. But she neither looked nor turned towards them, nor did she even return their courtesies. This they thought wondrous odd, and by no means least, the bridegroom. They then looked closer at her, and saw, to their great amazement, what preparation had been made here, for their reception. The giant saw how badly he had been dealt with, and how baffled he was, and many of the guests were sorry for his mishaps. Others of the guests, however, found that they had been made fools of, as the giant had invited them to his marriage-feast, only to mock them with a trunk of wood. First rose hard words, and then a riot between the giant and his followers on one side, and those guests, on the other, who thought they had been humbugged by him. So they set to work to fight, and went on fighting, till not one of them was left alive, and Helga saw from outside, all this unfair proceeding. When the trolls were felled, Helga ran home to her cottage as fast as she could, and fetched all her family. They dragged out from the cave, all the dead bodies, and gathered a pile round them, and put fire to it, and burned up all these monster-folk, into cold cinders. This done, they took all that was left in the cave, of any value, and brought it home to Carl's-cot. After this, Helga got many carpenters, and much building-material, and had a large and fine house made for herself, in which she took up her abode.

Her sisters never reached to any accomplishment of any kind, for they were void of all character and briskness of mind, being unaccustomed to any work, and knowing nothing that could be of use to them.

But Helga married, afterwards, a hopeful man, and they prospered in every way, loving each other both long and well.

BUKOLLA.

ONCE there lived an old man with his wife, in the wall-nook. They had three daughters, by name Sigridr, Signy, and Helga. The old man and his wife were very fond of Sigridr and Signy, but for Helga they had no love whatever, wherefore she always rested on the ashes in the hearth. It is said that the old couple had nothing in their possession but a cow, called Bukolla. This cow was such a rare and choice creature that, being milked three times a day, she gave no less milk each time, than forty pints. The old man rowed out fishing every day, always rowing in a huge tub, and Sigridr, his daughter, always brought him his dinner out to his fishing-bank, in another tub.

One day, it happened in Wall-nook, that the cow Bukolla was lost, and nobody knew what had become of her. Now the old man and his wife talked over what they should do, and at last decided upon sending Sigridr in search of the cow.

She was given provisions for the way, and new shoes. She walked a long time, till she came to a hillock. There she took refreshments, and said: "Bellow now, cow Bukolla, if I shall find you at all." But the cow did not bellow.

Now she went to another hillock, where she sat down and took refreshments, and said: "Bellow now, cow Bukolla, if I shall find you at all." But the cow did not bellow now either.

Then she went on till she came to a third hillock. There she took refreshments, and said: "Bellow now, cow Bukolla, if I shall find you at all." Then bellowed the cow, far above, in the mountain. Sigridr climbed up the mountain, till she came to the door of a cave, into which she went. Here she saw a wood-fire burning, a pot of meat over the fire, and flat-breads on the embers. There was also Bukolla, standing linked with an iron chain to a manger full of hay.

Sigridr took a cake off the embers, and a morsel of meat from the pot, and ate both. Then she tried to undo Bukolla's chain, but could not; wherefore she sat down in front of the cow, underneath her neck, and began scratching her. After a little time had passed, the cave began to tremble and shake, and a great she-troll came into the cave, who said: "Ah! here you are, Sigridr, carl's daughter. You shall not live long, for you have stolen from me." This said, the troll took her, and wrung her neck, and hurled the body towards a rift in the cave.

Now the story turns home to Wall-nook. Carl and his old wife began to find Sigridr's search too long, and thought she must be dead. They therefore decided upon sending Signy away, in search of Bukolla. She went away, but her fate was the very same asthat of Sigridr,—ending in the troll-woman's killing her in the cave.

Now Helga asked the old couple leave to search for Bukolla. But they thought it would be of little avail, as their pet-daughters had not found her, being now, most likely, dead. At last, however, Helga got leave to go. She put shoes of shark-skin on her feet; for provisions she had only a mixture of cod-liver oil and tallow, fish-skins, fins of dried cod, and scrapings from pots. She walked on till she came to a hillock. Then she said: "Here my sisters have taken food, here I shall take it also." And now she began to gnaw her unsavoury provisions. She said, while eating: "Bellow now, cow Bukolla, if I shall ever find you." But the cow bellowed not. She went on, then, to another hillock, where she did as she had done at the first one. She then walked to the third hillock, and said: "Bellow now, cow Bukolla, if I shall ever find you." Then she heard Bukolla bellow above her in the mountain. She walked on, and climbed the mountain, in the direction of the sound she had heard. At last she came to the door of a cave, into which she went. There a meat-pot was standing over the fire, and flat-breads lay on the embers. She put the flat-breads in order, added to the fire under the pot, but did not taste anything. After this, she sat down beside Bukolla, who stood there at a manger full of fine hay. In a little while, she heard outside a great rumbling noise, at which the whole cave trembled. Then an ogress came stalking into the cave, of wild looks.

She said to Helga: "Aha, here you are, Helga, carl's daughter! You shall live, for you have stolen nothing from me."

Now the night passed, and the ogress gave Helga food. Next day the troll went to her hunting in the forest, but, before she left, she said to Helga: "You shall do something now, to-day, for me. You shall fetch a brooch which I had when I was a maiden, sitting at home with my sister, the Dale-queen." Helga asked where it was. "That you must find out for yourself," said the troll, "and if you have not brought it home before nightfall, this very day, I will surely kill you."

The troll went away, and Helga seeing no possibility of doing the task, sat down on the steps of the cave and wept. Then a man of hideous appearance came to her: he was dressed in a skin-jacket, all rumpled and wrinkled from dryness, reaching in front down to the instep, but behind only down as far as the shoulderblade; and the phlegm was hanging down from the tip of his nose to his toes. He asked what she was weeping for. She said it would be of little use to tell him, as he was unlikely to be able to help her.

"I know," said he, "what is the matter with you; and, if you will kiss me to-night, I will help you to get the brooch."

She promised to do as he bade her, and asked him his name. He said it was Dordíngull. Now they both went from the cave, till they came to a little house, at the door of which were standing a pickaxe and a spade. Then said Dordíngull: "Pickaxe, pick; spade, shovel." Then pickaxe and spade set to work till they came to a brooch. Now Dordíngull took up the brooch, and gave it to Helga, and said: "Will you not kiss me now?" She said she really could not. So she went home to the cave, and put the brooch into the troll's bed. In the evening, when the troll came home, she asked where the brooch was. "It is in your bed," answered Helga. "Well done," said the troll, "but you have not been alone at work.

The next morning, the troll said to Helga: "I have a job for you to-day. You shall fetch a game of chess which I have at the Dale-queen's, my sister. I have long wanted to get it, but never got it yet."

Helga asked where the Dale-queen was. "That you must find out for yourself," said the troll; "and if you do not bring me the chess, I shall assuredly kill you."

The troll went away, but Helga was left to despair, and sat in the door of the cave, weeping. Dordíngull came thither, and said he would aid her, if she would kiss him that night. Helga said she would gladly agree to this condition, even were it a harder one. After this, they walked from the cave a long time, till they came to a palace far away. "In this palace," said Dordíngull, "lives the Dale-queen. Go in thither; she will welcome you well, and give you up the chess. She will bring you food; eat not a bit of it, but take three bits of it and put them in your pocket, and remember to bless, and sign the cross over the things on the table, when you sit down. When you are gone, she will send three savage wolves after you, and you shall throw one morsel to each of them."

Now Helga went to the palace. The Dale-queen received her well, and set food on the table for her, saying she knew on what errand she had come thither. When all the dishes had been spread on the table, the Dale-queen said: "Cut her, knife; stick her, fork; and swallow her, cloth!" Then answered the knife, the fork, and the cloth: "We cannot do it, Helga has crossed us so well." Then the Dale-queen left Helga alone for a while, and Helga at once cut three bits of meat and put them in her pocket, but tasted nothing. The Dale-queen gave the game of chess to Helga, who went away with it. When she was a little way off from the palace, she saw three wolves coming, running after her, and knew well that they were sent to be her bane. Helga took the morsels, and threw one for each of the wolves, who devoured them greedily, and instantly fell dead to the ground. Thereupon she went straight to the cave, and put the chess into the troll's bed. In the evening, on coming home, the troll asked where the chess was. Helga answered that it was in the bed. "Well done," said the troll, "but I fancy you are not alone at work."

Next morning, the troll said: "To-day I have a job for you, Helga. You shall cook for me, make my bed, and empty the slops, and have all done by to-night, or else I will surely kill you." Helga said this was an easy job enough.

But when the troll was gone, and Helga would make the bed, the bed-clothes were so fixed that they could not be moved; it was the same thing when she tried to take the pail from under the bed; and, at last, she sat down in the cave-door, and wept.

Then came Dordíngull, and offered her his aid, if she would kiss him to-night. She promised to do so, and

Dordíngull began to make the bed and to cook, and, for him, everything was loose. At last, he put a big pot of boiling tar under the troll's bed, and said to Helga: "Into this pot she will fall to-night, I fancy, when she flings herself on to the bed, as she will do, for she will be very tired, and will eat greedily. But under her pillow is her life-egg, and this you must break upon her face as she falls into the kettle; and if you wish, you may call my name."

Then Dordíngull left Helga alone.

In the evening, the troll, when she came home, said all was well done, but found it strange that Helga could accomplish it all alone. She flung herself down on her bed, but instantly tumbled into the kettle full of boiling tar, and Helga flung the egg into her face, and broke it, calling, at the same time, upon Dordíngull. He came instantly. So the troll lost her life, and Dordíngull and Helga burnt her at once.

Suddenly, thumps and rumblings were heard outside like loud thunder. Helga became so frightened that she kissed Dordíngull three times. He said that the Dale-queen was now dying also, for both sisters had had the same life-egg. This night Helga and Dordíngull slept together. But, when Helga awoke in the morning, she saw a young and beautiful prince sleeping at her side, and by him was lying the Dordíngull-shape.

She burned the shape and sprinkled the prince with water. He was released from his spell, and anon took Helga to wife. They gathered from the cave everything that was of value, and did not forget Bukolla. Furthermore, they took all precious and valuable things from the palace of the Dale-queen, which, all in all, amounted to mighty wealth. Bukolla they gave back to her owner, the carl in the cot. But they themselves went abroad, and took up their abode in the realm of the prince's father, and succeeded him to the throne when he died. After this, they lived for a long time, and their life was full of true love; and so ends this tale.

ANOTHER STORY OF ANOTHER BUKOLLA.

THERE were once, in a cottage, an old man and his old wife, who had one son, but were, by no means, fond of him. In the cottage there were only these three people. The old man and his wife had one cow only, and no other beasts. This cow was called Bukolla. Once the cow calved, and the old woman gave it her aid. When the cow had calved, and all was right again, the old dame went into the family-room, where she stayed for a while. But when she returned to look after the cow, nothing was to be seen of it. Now the old man and his wife went in search of the cow. They sought far and near, but returned empty-handed. This made them mighty wroth, and they bade their son go immediately in search of the cow, forbidding him to return unless he brought Bukolla with him. They fitted the boy out, giving him provisions and new shoes, and thus he went forth into the wide world, not knowing whither to turn. He walked for a long, long time, and at last sat down to eat. While he was eating, he said: "Bellow now, my Bukolla, if thou art anywhere alive." Then he heard the cow bellow, far, far away. After this, the carl's son went on for a long, long time, and then sat down to eat, saying: "Bellow now, my Bukolla, if thou art anywhere alive." He heard Bukolla bellow, somewhat nearer than the first time. Still the carl's son walked on for a long, long time, till he came to the top of some high rocks. There he sat down to eat, and said: "Bellow now, my Bukolla, if thou art anywhere alive." He heard then that the cow bellowed under his feet. He clambered down the rocks, till he saw a huge cave, and, going into it, found Bukolla chained up under a sloping rock, in the cave. He undid at once the chain, and took Bukolla away with him homewards. When he had gone some distance on his homeward way, he saw an immense ogress coming striding after him, accompanied by another, somewhat smaller. He saw that the big troll was so long-striding, that she would overtake him at once. He said, therefore: "What shall we do now, my Bukolla?"

She answered: "Take a hair from my tail, and lay it on the earth." He did so, and the cow said to the hair: "I will and spell that you become so big a river, that flying bird alone can cross it."

In the same moment, the hair became a great river. And when the big troll came to it, she stopped and said: "This shall not avail you, lad! Run home, wench," she said to the smaller ogress, "and fetch my father's big bull." The other went and returned with a bull of gigantic size, which at once drank up all the river. Then saw the carl's son, that the long-stepping troll would soon overtake him; wherefore he said to Bukolla: "What shall we do now, my Bukolla?"

"Take a hair from my tail," she said, "and lay it on the earth." Then she said to the hair: "I will and spell that you become so great a flame, that none but flying birds can cross it."

At once, the hair was turned into a flame. When the troll came to the flame, she said: "This shall not avail you, wretch! Go," she said to the lesser troll, "and fetch my father's big bull." The other went and fetched the bull, which spirted all the water it had drunk from the river, into the flame, and put it out.

Now saw the carl's son that the long-stalking troll must soon overtake him. Therefore he said: "What shall we do now, my Bukolla?"

"Take a hair from my tail, and lay it on the earth," said Bukolla; and then she said to the hair: "I will and spell that you become so high a mountain, that none but flying bird can pass it."

Then the hair was turned into such a high mountain that the lad could only see straight up into the clear sky. When the troll came to the mountain, she said: "This shall avail you nought, wretch that you are." Turning to the lesser troll, she said: "Fetch my father's bore-iron, lass." The other went back, and returned with the bore-iron: then the troll bored a hole through the mountain. But, as soon as she could see through, she was too eager to pass, and, thrusting herself into the hole, became fixed in it, a stone; for it was too narrow for her; and there she is yet. But the carl's son reached home with Bukolla, whereat the old man and his wife were mighty glad.

WIDE-AWAKE, AND HIS BROTHERS.

THERE were, once, an old carl and his wife, who had five sons, each a year younger than his next eldest brother. There were no folk in the cot, but the old couple and their sons. Once, as was their wont, the old couple went into the meadows, haymaking, leaving, meanwhile, the brothers at home, for the lads had then reached such an age, that no risk was run in leaving them alone. That day, the weather was fine, and the brothers were amusing themselves round the cottage. While they were thus playing, an old and infirm woman came to them, and asked the lads to give her to drink, the which they, at once, did. When she had quenched her thirst, she thanked them heartily, and asked them their names. They said that they had none. Then said the old woman: "I was glad of your cooling drink, for I was nearly fainting with thirst; but I am so poor that I am unable to reward you as you deserve. However, I will give a name to each of you. The eldest shall be hight Wide-awake; the second, Hold-fast; the third, Strong-hewing; the fourth, Sharp-tracker; and the fifth, Well-climbing. These names I give you for the cooling drink, and I hope they will yield you full due." After this, the old woman bade farewell to the brothers, and told them to remember well their names. And so she went her way.

In the evening, when their parents came home, they asked them if anyone had come, in the course of the day. The brothers told the truth, and also the names that they had got from the old woman. And hereat, the old carl and his wife were pleased.

The brothers continued living with their parents, till they were all of age. Then they said they would leave the cot, in order to become perfect in manly accomplishments, elsewhere; and to this, they got their parents' leave.

Now they went away, and nothing is told of their travels, till they came to the king. They asked for a winter's stay with him; but they would stay either all of them, or none. The king said they might stay with him through the winter, if they would, at once, promise to keep watch and ward over his daughters, on Christmas-night. This they promised to do, and thus became all winter-guests at the king's court.

But the truth was, that the king had had five daughters, two of whom had been lost on the last two Christmas-nights, from their maiden-bower, in spite of a watch being set to guard the place. Nobody could tell how they had vanished, and nowhere could they be found, in spite of all searches that had been made for them by command of the king.

When the brothers knew how matters stood, they caused the king to have another bower made, standing alone by itself, and very strong. Now Christmas came, and the three daughters that were left went into the new bower, as did also the brothers. They all thought they would keep awake through Christmas-night, but every one of them fell asleep, except Wide-awake. In the bower there was a light, and it was locked in with strong bars. In the earlier part of the night, Wide-awake saw a shadow, moving upon the bower-window, and next, there was stretched through it a hand of mighty size. It moved toward one of the beds of the king's daughters. Wide-awake roused up his brothers, in a hurry, and Hold-fast seized the hand that was stretched in, and held it so firmly, that the owner of it could not withdraw it, though hard enough he strove. Then came Strong-hewing, and cut off the hand, upon the window-ledge. Then he who was outside, ran away, and the brothers pursued him. Sharp-tracker could easily trace his footsteps. At last, they came to some sheer rocks, up which none of them could climb, but Well-climbing. He climbed up the cliff, and, having got up, threw down a cable to the brothers, and thus hauled them all up. They now found themselves at the mouth of a large cave, into which they went, and saw there a troll, who was weeping. They asked her what distressed her. She was, at first, unwilling to tell them, but, at last, came out with her complaint. She said that her poor old carl had lost one hand in the night, and therefore she was so sad. They bade her be of good cheer, for they could cure the old fellow. "But," said they, "nobody must look at us while we cure him. We are, indeed, so careful of our secrets, that we bind all who are present, in order to hinder them from prying about our medicines, or coming near us while we are performing our cure; for, upon that depends a great deal."

Now they offered the she-troll, to cure her carl at once, if she would let herself be bound. So they tied her strongly, and then went into the cave, to the carl. He was a troll, as ugly as he was big. The brothers, however, without any dispute about the matter, killed him at once. After that they went to the troll-woman and killed her too. This done, they ransacked the cave, and found there nothing of value that they cared to take away with them. Nor did they find there any other trolls. But, in their search, they came to a little out-cave, and, having entered it, found there the two missing daughters of the king, in fetters. One was plump, but the other had become lean. They were speaking together, bewailing their lot, and, as the youths entered, the fat sister said that she was doomed to die that day, to be a Christmas-dish for the trolls. But, at that very moment, the brothers came in to them, and told them how matters now stood, in the cave. Then, as you may fancy, the sisters were glad, and away the brothers brought them to the palace, and took them into the bower, to their sisters. This was yet earlier than day-dawn, but, as soon as day broke, the king came to the bower, in order to know how the brothers had performed their duty of guardianship. But when he heard all that had happened in the night, and saw all his beloved daughters together again, he was, as it were, out of his wits for joy. He now had a grand banquet made ready, which ended in the carl's sons marrying, each one of the king's daughters.

The brothers became, afterwards, the greatest of men, and lived with their wives, both long and well, in all kinds of prosperity. And now this tale is at an end.

THE STORY OF THORSTEINN, THE KING'S SON.

THERE were once a king and queen, in their realm, who had a son named Thorsteinn. He was early a youth of great growth, and very hopeful was he. Everybody loved him for his amiable disposition, and his liberality. But his love of giving away money, soon passed all measure, and his mother used often to chide him for squandering his means. She did all she could to check his prodigality, as she called it, but he went on his own way, giving money on all sides, as far as he could. When his mother died, he thought he could now give away, without being chidden, and was glad to be rid of her grumblings. Thorsteinn was firm in the belief that his father would approve of his way of spending his money, as he had never blamed him, in the least, for it, hitherto. But things took quite another turn. For, now the king continued chiding his son, where the queen had left off. He tried to shew the youth, by reasoning, how unbecoming such prodigality was, and that thereby, he must become poor sooner than he expected, as there was nothing within his reach, that he did not wish to squander away. But reasoning was here out of place. Thorsteinn was the same and continued the same as formerly, and gave everything away, as soon as he became owner of it.

Now the time came, when his father died. Being left to his own designs, the prince thought he could act delightfully, being checked by no bonds, and having only to yield to his own pleasure,—that of giving money away. So, now, he gave money to anyone who liked to have it; and many a one was found who liked it. Therefore, albeit the wealth he had come into, on his father's death, was great, it must needs lessen with his prodigality. And, to tell a long story in few words, it came at last to that pass, that all Thorsteinn's property was squandered away, and he had the kingdom left on his hands, with no money to govern it. Now, Thorsteinn wanted to get a purchaser for the kingdom, that he might have some money,—which would be easier to manage than a whole kingdom,—to give away. At last, he found a buyer, and got for his realm, a horse loaded with gold and silver.

When Thorsteinn had made his bargain, his friends began to diminish in number. They all turned their backs to him, when they saw that there was not a fat pig to flay, where he was. Now Thorsteinn saw how matters stood, and thought that the best thing would be, to leave these fellows for good. He therefore went away, with all his property, which was easily carried on one horse. He himself rode on his chestnut, a horse with which he never would part, on account of his many good qualities: but of these no mention is made in this story.

Now, Thorsteinn travelled about, for a long time, through heaths and wildernesses, without knowing, in the least, whither he went; nor did he much care which direction he took. Wherever he found a clump of grass, growing in the wildernesses, he grazed his horses thereupon. But no other delay had he there.

Once, when he was baiting his horses, there came over him a deep gloom and sadness, for he thought that he should lose his life on this journey. However, he saw that there was nothing to be done, but to go on, what soever he might encounter on the road, since he had already begun his journeying. At last, on the road, he found a farmhouse. Thereat was he very glad, as he had neither seen nor encountered anybody, for a long time. He asked for shelter, and was taken, at once, into the family-room, where he slept the night through. But when he awoke in the morning every soul was out of the farmhouse. This startled him somewhat, for he thought there might be some trick in it. He got up in all haste, and when he was dressed, ran out. He then saw that the farmer was, with all his household, knocking eagerly on a mound in the field. Thorsteinn, not a little astonished at this madman's proceeding, asked the farmer what this foolish conduct meant. The farmer said that it was no wonder he did this, for, in the mound was buried a man, who had owed him two hundred rix-dollars when he died. Now the prince tried, by reason, to persuade the farmer that, by these means he was not very likely to get his debt paid; on the contrary, he said, he wasted yet more, in the time it took him to perform this foolish job. The farmer said he cared not a snap of the finger for that; his only satisfaction was to leave the dead no rest or repose in the grave, and he would never, as long as he lived, break off what he had once made his custom. Then the king's son asked if the farmer would not find it enough, should some one happen to pay the debt for the dead man. The farmer said: "Yes." Thereupon, the prince paid him all the money, and the farmer left off thumping the mound, promising never to do it more.

After this, the king's son asked the farmer to shew him the way to places thickly peopled. This the farmer did, telling him that when he had followed the road for a while, straight from the house, he would come to where the paths branched one from the other, and begged him not to take the path that went to the east, but the other which went to the west.

But when the prince had gone some distance along the left path, he thought it might be good sport, to try if any danger loomed on the other. He therefore returned to the place where the road branched, and thence went on eastward, till he came to a farm, consisting of lofty buildings. This place was strongly guarded both by nature and the hand of man. He found, however, a pass leading to the houses, and, leaving his horses behind, went through into the farm. He walked into one of the houses that chanced to be open, but nobody was to be seen out of doors. When the prince came in, he saw seven beds, all very large in size, but one of them was far the biggest. In the middle of the floor was standing a table, the whole length of the house, but with a passage at each end, and plate was standing in rows on it. But no living being did Thorsteinn see in the house. He now went to look after his horses, intending to take up his night-quarters here, although he found it rather awful. He therefore took the packs and saddles of his horses, and drove them on to pasture, and then put the baggage where he thought fittest. But his sword he kept with him, being the thing on which he set most store, next to his chestnut horse. When all this was done, he returned to the farmhouse, and going in, entered every building and every room to which he found access possible. In one of the rooms he found good and plenty of provisions. He took a goodly portion of them, which he put in each plate on the table, and afterwards made the beds, as nicely and as neatly as he could. Although he thought he had done here as much good as it was possible for him to do, he did not dare to be in a place where he could be easily discovered and surrounded, wherefore he would find for himself some dark nook, to hide himself in, and at last he managed to thrust himself into an opening behind a door, between the doorpost and a panel.

A short while after, Thorsteinn heard a great rumbling noise outside, and then the door of the house was thrust open and some one heard to enter the room. Immediately afterwards, he heard some one say: "Some one has been here: let us cut short his hours!"

Then answered another: "That shall not be; I take him under my protection, for here I have so much to say, that I have power to save one man's life. Besides, he has, of his own accord, done us a service, made our beds, and spread our table, and done everything well. If he appears he shall take neither hurt nor harm."

At these words, the king's son plucked up spirit, and appeared. He found the fellows very great-grown, and more like trolls than men, but their leader was the most strikingly trollish in look of them, and giantlike withal. Thorsteinn stayed with them through that night. Next morning, they bade him stay a week with them, telling him he should have nothing to do, but cook for them and make their beds. To this the king's son agreed, and was thus with them through that week, and they were mutually satisfied. After the lapse of this week, the farm-dweller entreated the prince to stay with them for a year. This he promised to do, albeit he found this home a very dull one. The big giant promised Thorsteinn high wages for his work, and gave him all his keys but one. Every day, the prince went through all the houses and rooms at the farm, except that one whereof the big giant kept the key, none of the keys he had fitting the lock of it. Once he tried to pick the lock, but unavailingly. But Thorsteinn observed that the great carl went into it, every evening and every morning. When he had been here for a while, he asked the giant why he had given him keys to all the rooms but that one; saying further that, as he was faithful with that which had been already entrusted to his charge, so would he also be, with whatever might be in that room.

"In this room," said the giant, "there is nothing, as you may judge from my having trusted you with many things of great value." And here the matter dropped.

Now we may here relate shortly, that the prince stayed in this place for four years running, and had very high wages for it. He had, by that time, quite given up mentioning the room that interested him, and that amongst other things served to make him more beloved by the giants, every day.

But, what chiefly tempted the prince to stay so long, was that he was for ever watching a chance, to find out if nothing was in this wonderful room.

One morning, he was thinking of this as usual, and hit upon a plan. He knocked violently at the door, and came running in to the house, with his heart in his shoes, feigning the greatest fright. He had in his hand a piece of dough, which he was kneading. He asked the giants if they had heard nothing. "Yes," they said, and that they fancied it had been some noise made by himself. He said it was far from that, adding that he had not dared to go to the door, but was sure that some one had knocked at it. They said he was quite right in not going out; and rushing from their beds (for they were not up yet), they flew to the door, half-dressed. In his hurry, the big giant had left the key by his pillow, and the prince at once took a mould of it, in the dough. Now the giants came in, worse than ashamed of their disappointment, as they, naturally enough, had seen nobody at the door. They charged Thorsteinn with having done this in order to make fools of them, but he excused himself and denied their charges, saying at last, that it must have been some spirit. And that was the end of the matter.

But after this, the prince used, in the daytime, to make himself a key after the mould in the dough. For a long while, this was a work of great difficulty, but, at last, he succeeded. He now opened the room, but nothing save thick darkness was, at first, to be seen. He lighted a candle, and found, on looking round, a maiden hung up by her hair. His first work was to unfasten her and take her down, and next he asked her about her family and origin, and found that she was a king's daughter, whom the big giant had stolen, and would force, against her will, to marry him. But as she was not to be persuaded by any means, he tortured her in this way. She was now little more than mere bone, for the giant also starved her. The prince gave her food, but, before evening, he fastened her up by the hair as formerly, so that nothing out of the way should be observed. After this, he came to her every day, and brought her food enough, but fastened her up every night, before the giant came home; no change, therefore, was to be traced in the dark room, and nobody had the least suspicion of the prince's doings.

When the fifth year was past, Thorsteinn said he must indeed go away, but the giants would make any sacrifice to persuade him to stay. He then said to the big giant that, if he wanted to keep him yet one year, he must give him as his wages for the year, that which was in the locked room, which he was not allowed to enter, whatever it might be. The giant prayed him not to ask for what was nothing, as it would be far better for him to receive his wages as usually. No! That was not the prince's will; he said he would have nothing but what he had asked for, should it be loss or gain to him, and about this they disputed hard, till the giant promised him the wages he demanded.

How Thorsteinn treated the princess this year, we need not tell. But when the year was over, the giant opened the room, for the king's son was by no means to be persuaded to stay longer. The giant went into the darkness, and soon came back with the princess, and wondered at her being so fat and well-looking; but, paying no farther attention to this, he gave her to Thorsteinn. Now Thorsteinn prepared for departure, fetched his horses, over which he had kept a sharp watch, and tied up his package. But, what with his wages, all his baggage had swollen up to such a mighty bulk, that he could scarcely get away with it all. The king's daughter bade him be watchful, for the giant would attack him on the way. He was, therefore, always in his armour, and kept at hand his own good sword. What the princess had said, soon came true, for, on their way, when they had only travelled a short way from the farm, they were overtaken by three of the giants, who in trollish fury flew upon Thorsteinn, but he defended himself so gallantly, that he left them all dead on the field. After that, he took breath. But a short while after, there came two others of the giants, whom Thorsteinn also managed to kill. Now two were left, the big giant and his brother. They came in a mighty rage, and made a violent onset upon Thorsteinn. First he managed to kill the brother. Then the big giant, utterly losing his temper, flung away his weapon, and rushed wildly upon the prince, and seized him in his arms. Now the king's son could do nothing to defend himself, and fell to the earth with the giant on the top of him. When the princess saw into what straits the prince was brought, she seized an axe which had belonged to one of the others, and stabbed the big giant with it.

Afterwards she aided the prince in throwing off the giant's body, but Thorsteinn was now so weary, that he could not continue the journey. They therefore turned back to the abode of the giants, and though they found it dull and wearisome, they determined to wait there a while, to see if some vessel might not appear in the neighbourhood of the shore, or even anchor there, the farm being close to the sea. After some time, there came a vessel, and they went to the shore and talked to the folk on board. The master of the ship was hight Raudr, and was the minister of the princess's father. The king had promised him his daughter, if he could find her and bring her to him. The crew received Thorsteinn and the king's daughter, and brought all their property, which they had taken from the giant-farm, and which was very great, on board the vessel. After this, they went on board and left the country. But when the vessel was some distance from the shore, Raudr had a boat hauled overboard, and put the king's son into it, alone. He then made the crew swear that they would not mention the name of Thorsteinn, but would say that he had himself killed the giants, and delivered the king's daughter from them. This they swore, but the king's daughter refused to do so, in spite of Raudr's threats and coaxing. Raudr thought, however, that he had done a good job, and sailed home.

But of Thorsteinn it is told that, when the boat, oarless and rudderless, began to toss and roll about on the waves, he waxed mighty fearful. Then he heard a voice say to him: "Be not afraid of drifting about in the main; I shall help you." Thereupon, the boat sped forward through the sea, as if it were dragged or pushed, as swiftly as the vessel which carried Raudr, and came to the right shore at the same time as the ship, but in another place. And he who brought the boat safely to shore, was the dead man for whom Thorsteinn had formerly paid the debt. He now appeared, and told Thorsteinn that he had arrived in the kingdom where the father of the princess lived, and that he should go and be the king's stableman, and have what was under the manger in this stable. Thorsteinn's chestnut horse had been brought over on the ship, and was added to the number of the king's chestnuts. This horse nobody could approach or touch, save the king's daughter and the new groom.

When the king saw his daughter, he was more glad than we can tell, and had a great feast to welcome her, and at that feast it was determined that Raudr should marry her. She, however, would not have the wedding performed, until the stableman had told the story of his life. This the king granted, and then all the truth came out. Raudr was killed and the crew tortured, but his daughter the king gave to Thorsteinn, yielding him up, at the same time, the half part of his kingdom. Now, under the manger in the stables, Thorsteinn found heaps of all kinds of gems; and, after the king's death, he had the whole kingdom. He lived both long and well, and was found to be a most excellent king, and was beloved by everybody, till the day of his death, at a high age.

COMIC STORIES.

THE STORY OF THE CARL'S DAUGHTERS.

IN the days of yore, there lived once, in their cot, an old man and his wife; and in his realms, a certain king with his queen. The queen died, and after that the king, remaining single, governed the country with his minister, and one only son.

The cottager and his wife had three daughters, but no son. The daughters were brought up by the old man and his wife; but, as they grew up, they got so lazy, that they would do nothing. This, of course, greatly grieved both father and mother, but put up with it they must, as there was no chance of their daughters altering their way of life. Thus, therefore, the girls grew up in laziness and good-for-nothingness, until at last they agreed upon killing the old man and his wife, that they might follow undisturbed their own will, and live and do as they liked thereafter. This evil purpose they, one night, accomplished, by putting strongly poisonous herbs into the old couple's stir-about, so that both dropped off to sleep, and nevermore awoke to this life. Now the maidens could quietly do, and deal with everything in the cot, as they chose; they had a good table, and enjoyed without stint, all sorts of victuals. Thus they went on, until they had used up all the provisions they found in the cottage. After that, they had some difficulty in finding enough means of living. They had heard that the king had many cattle, amongst which was an ox which was by far the finest of them all. One day the girls all went away, on the sly, and taking the ox home with them, managed somehow to kill it.

Now the story turns to the king. The king's ox-keepers soon missed the ox, and told the king of this loss. The king, suspecting that the carl's daughters might have stolen the ox, bade his minister go to the cottage and ask for it there. The minister went away to the cottage, and when he came there, all the carl's daughters stood outside the door, laughing. The eldest bade the youngest go in, and see if that which they were cooking in their pot were not done. She soon came out again and said that it was done already. So they asked the minister to enter with them into the kitchen. They made him sit down on one of the hearthstones, which he must needs do and be thankful. He saw that, in the pot, there were only haddock-bones.

They sat down and asked him to dine with them, but he would not. He, however, waited until they had finished dinner, and then went out. But when he came to the door, he found to his amazement, that a snow-storm had come on, so thick, that it was impossible to find one's way. Then came to him the sisters, saying that he had two choices before him, either to be thrust out of doors by them, or to share the bed of the youngest, for that night. Neither of these was agreeable to him, but he chose to sleep with the carl's daughter, that night, feeling sure that none knew of it, but he and the sisters; for, to go out was sheer madness, as it would be most assuredly his death. Evening came, and they all went to bed, the minister as he had promised. When he awoke next morning about dawn, he found that all the sisters had vanished, even she who had been his bed-fellow for the night. He staggered from bed, and dressing, tottered out, and walked for a long time, until he thought he saw something in the distance, which looked like a punt or skiff. Drawing nearer, he saw a large river, wherefore he laid his hand upon the boat, and was going to launch it, in order to cross the water in it, when the damsels appeared, all of a sudden, with lights in their hands, and in roars of laughter, and asked what he was about, fumbling with the ash-trough on the cottage-brook.

Seeing the trick, he was mighty startled, but they scoffed at and mocked him fearfully, and said they would kill him at once, if he would not promise to marry that one of the sisters, whose bed he had shared last night. He dared not but promise it. After that, he went home, and told the king he had had to lie out in the storm, all the night, without being able to get to the cottage, to the carl's daughters. The king thought he had fared somewhat shamefully, but said that the matter should stop there, and that his son should now go, in order to find out all about the ox; for he was much grieved at the loss of it. The king's son went, and found all the girls laughing on the path, in front of the door. The eldest bade the youngest go in, and see if that which was boiling in the pot was done. She returned soon after, saying that it was done. They let the king's son go in with them, and gave him a seat on the hearthstone, which he must needs take and be thankful. He now saw that, in the pot, there were only haddock-bones. They asked the king's son to dine with them, but he refused; so they dined in all ease. When they had dined, the king's son was going home again, but when he went out, a hailstorm had come on. The carl's daughters came out and said he must do as he would, either go into the storm and die a speedy death, or else share the bed with the second sister. He saw that it would be sure death for him to go out, wherefore he chose the latter alternative. Now all passed as formerly. The sisters vanished, and he got up and went out walking, till the boat and the broad river were in view. And, just as he was going to cross the river in the boat, the girls came laughing, with lights, and saying: "It is somewhat unseemly for a king's son, to dangle about with the ash-scuttle, on the cottage-brook."

He was not a little startled at this, but when he looked round again, he saw that what they had said was quite right.

Then they said to him: "Now you shall be killed if you do not promise to marry the damsel, whose bed you shared last night."

He dared not but promise, and then went home to his father's palace, saying that he had been lying out all night, and had not been able to get to the cot.

The king said: "Badly succeed our journeys now; but I will not leave the thing unfinished; therefore, go back, both of you, and accomplish your tasks."

But they would, by no means, go back again, and their being sent again to the cottage, came to nothing. At last, the king was obliged to go himself. He came to the cottage, and found the girls all laughing outside the door. When he came, the eldest bade the youngest go in and see if that, which was cooking in the pot, was done. She went in, and immediately returned, saying that it was done. Now they went in, and asked the king to come in also. He followed them, therefore, to the kitchen, where they bade him sit down on one of the hearthstones. He must needs do so thankfully, and so sat down. Now he saw in the pot, haddock-bones only, where he had expected to find the flesh of his ox. The carl's daughter asked him to dine with them, but he excused himself, and sat till they had finished dinner. Then he stood up, bade farewell, and went out; but mightily was he startled to find that it had come over with hail and storm, and awful thunder and lightning. He was, therefore, no sooner out of the door, than he flew hastily back into it, for shelter. Then came the girls to him, and said they would give him his choice between two things:—he should either go out into the storm and lose his life, or sleep with the eldest of the maidens that night. He chose the latter, liking to preserve his life. Now, when evening came, they went to bed, and the king with the eldest of the sisters.

When the king awoke, they had all vanished, even his fair bed-fellow. He dressed and went out. When he had walked some way from the house, he saw the rippling of a lake in the distance, surrounded by sheer rocks, none of which, strangely enough, reached higher than up to his chest. By the lake-side, he found a staff, which he took in his hand, and went into the water, in order to wade through. But it soon became very deep, and he began to paddle and splash about violently in the water. Just at this very moment came the girls, in roars of laughter, saying: "Indeed, we cannot help finding that the king makes too little of himself, by becoming a sniffer and sneaker-about in our pantry. Lo! actually, he has got into his hand our whirl-broom wherewith we whip the cream, dabbling with it in our largest whey-tub, and standing himself in the whey, up to his chest. Who could fancy his majesty in such a position?"

Greatly startled, the king looked round, and stood as a stone pillar, blushing and in shamefacedness, when he saw that what they said was true. Then they said to him: "If you will not promise to take your bed-fellow of last night, for your queen, we will finish you off, and drown you in this whey-tub, wherein you have the pleasure of finding yourself at present."

The king did not dare but promise this, and was then released from his awkward position, and went home to his palace.

Now the men told one another how each had fared, and saw that their eyes had been magically blinded, this being also the reason why they could only see haddock-bones in the pot, instead of the ox-flesh. They made up their minds to put the best face upon the matter, in order to prevent further scandal; so they fetched the carl's daughters home to the palace. Marriage-feasts were prepared, and each married his former bed-fellow. All went smoothly after the weddings, which proved happy to all parties. The king's son succeeded to the realm and crown, after his father, and died at a good old age.

THE STORY OF THE CARL'S SON, AND THE KING'S CHIEF-HERDSMAN.

ONCE there lived an old man with his wife, near a certain king's palace. The carl and his wife had only one child, a son, of whom both were very fond, but he was so naughty and lazy that he would do no work at all. They had one cow, and over this cow he should watch. He did so for a while, but soon left off watching it. Then the old man and his wife waxed wroth, and drove the lad off.

He went away from them, and having walked long, came at last to a farm-house, at the door of which he knocked. There came out a man, who asked wherefore he was faring. The lad said he had been driven away from his parents, on account of being so naughty and lazy. "Now I want you to shelter me for the night," said he, furthermore.

"Shelter I will give you," said the man, "but, to-morrow I have a task for you to do; and it is well that you should know that I am the king's herdsman."

At first, the boy stood silent, but after a while he promised to do the work. After this, the master of the house took the boy inside. When he came in, he saw two girls and the man's wife. Soon after he had entered, food, such as bread and meat, was brought to him in plenty. Of talk there was little that evening, nor was the boy told to do any work. In due time, he went to bed, and slept till next morning. When he was dressed, the master of the house came to him, saying: "I have decided upon the work to be done by you to-day."

"What is that?" asked the boy.

"To watch one hundred swine," said the other.

"That I am unwont to do," said the lad.

"But you must do it," his master replied.

After that, the boy took the herd of swine, and drove them on to pasture. But, when they had been there a little while, they waxed so unruly and run-away, that he could in no way keep them in their pasture. They would all run off, to the mountain, but he watched his chance, when they had all got into some narrow place, to turn them, and drive them all off to the cottage of the old carl and his wife. The carl was amazed, and asked his son whence he had got this herd. The boy answered: "The king's chief-herdsman is the owner of this lot. He gave them to me to watch; but in the pasture they became so wild and troublesome to me, that I made up my mind to drive them off to your home. Make, therefore, the best use of this catch, and kill them all at once."

"That I will not do," said the old man, "for it will be thy speedy death."

"Nay," said the lad, "I shall find redes in plenty, to make my escape good."

Then the old man killed all the swine, and got rid of them as quickly as he could. After this, the lad bade him give him a good piece of string. When he had this, the boy took all the tails of the swine, and tied them together by the thick ends. Then he went off, till he came to a slough, in the neighbourhood, where he had been watching the swine. He plunged all the tails into the bog, letting all the tips of them stick out, with a little distance between them. On the bank of the slough there was a large stone; this the boy rolled into the slough, on to the string which was tied round the tails in two bundles, in such a way that it sunk the middle of it, so that neither could the stone be seen, nor could the ends of the tails be drawn up by hawling or heaving. When he had done this, off ran the boy home to the herdsman, with a sad and sorry look. When he came back, the herdsman asked him what was the matter with him, and where the swine were. The boy answered: "O ask me not about them. Such a tale! When I had brought them on to the pasture, they became so wild that they sprang about in every direction, but I ran about, hither and thither, in order to drive them together; and so much had I to run, that I thought I should burst from weariness. Now, having at last checked them, a wonder happened which I should never have believed, had I not seen it myself: they all gathered round a slough, and jumped into it, and sunk, and nothing is to be seen of them but their tails."

"This is a vile lie of yours," said the herdsman.

"Nay," answered the boy, "it is the mere truth."

"Well, then," said the house-owner, "you must shew me some signs or proofs of this, if you expect me to pay the least heed to what you say."

"Come, then, yourself, and see," answered the lad.

Then they both ran off to the slough, and the herdsman now saw clearly that all was true about these unruly swine. He began hauling at the tails, but no!

nothing moved. After that, both of them hauled, but the tails were not to be moved.

"This is, indeed, a great wonder," said the herdsman; "and, of course, it is not your fault, as you could not help it. Therefore, I cannot blame you, but must leave my loss unpaid, as it is."

Thereupon they went home, and the boy slept the night through. Next morning, the house-owner came to the lad, saying: "Another job I have for you today. I have one hundred wethers which you must watch, and see that none of them be lost."

"I will try my best," quoth the lad.

So he took charge of the wethers, and drove them on to the pasture. He stood over them, and kept them in a thick cluster, hindering them from spreading themselves out. But, a short while after, they became so unruly by this pressure, that they ran away from him, without his being able to keep them together. Hereat, he was both grieved and wroth, and said: "Ah! this is only what I have deserved, for I was so untrue when I had to watch my father's cow, and would do no work for him."

And then he did his best to run round the wethers, and drive them together; and, having succeeded in this, he drove the whole lot home to his father's cottage. On seeing the wethers, his father was quite astonished, and asked his son what he was about, and where he had found them, and who was their owner. The boy told him the truth. Then said the carl: "Do not so foolish a thing as to give these wethers to me. Go with them, rather, to the chief herdsman at once."

"No," replied the lad, "let us slaughter them all for the benefit of your household."

"Nay," quoth the carl; "that would be your speedy death."

"That is by no means sure," answered the youth; "but, whatever be my fate, I will have my own will in this matter."

Thereupon, at the lad's urging, they killed all the wethers, and stowed out of sight all the meat, skins, and heads of them. But with the head of the forerunner, to the horns of which there were horns attached, the boy ran off into the forest where he had to watch the sheep. There was, in that place, a high hill, and on the top of it a tall, pillar-like rock; and on the top of that was a grass-plat, and thence sprung forth a tall bush, whose branches spread wide from the stem. Now the boy climbed up the rock with the head of the wether, and then up the trunk of the tree, by help of the branches and knots, till he got to that branch which was in the middle. To this he fastened the wether's head by a cord which he had drawn through it, so that the horns were free and dangled in the wind, for there happened to be a high wind, almost a gale, and the bells tinkled loudly. Then he got down again, but from below he could not see the head, for the rock-pillar was so high, and the bush so thick.

Now the boy ran home to his master, and was, as he arrived sweating, and had his face swollen from weeping, very sad of mien. The house-owner asked where the wethers were. Then said the boy: "O speak not of it; I know not what portents and wonders are gathering round me."

The master said: "Tell me quickly, where are the wethers?"

The boy answered, half sobbing: "I cannot tell it you; they were so unruly, that I had no means in my power to keep them together. Then I could scarcely believe my own senses. I heard some heavy din in the air, and thought a gale was approaching; but lo! in a moment afterwards, all the wethers soared up in the air from before my eyes, and I stood and looked, and long I looked after them, and I heard constantly the tinkle of the bells on the horns of the forerunner. They have been taken up to heaven."

"What big falsehood are you palming upon me, you wretch?" cried the master.

"Nay," said the boy, "I tell you the mere truth;" and here he began crying bitterly.

"You must show me good proof of it, if you ever wish me to believe you," said the master.

"Come with me, then," the boy said.

So they both went forth; it was late in the day and waxing dusky. The boy went before, till he came to the rock-pillar with the bush upon it; but now they could scarcely see it, for the day speedily darkened into night. Now the farmer heard the bell-tinkling above him, in the air. Then said the boy: "My good master, you will now, I believe, hear the bells tinkle in the horns of your forerunner."

"Yes," answered the other, "I hear you tell the truth. They have been taken up to heaven, and I cannot throw the blame of it upon you. You shall be free from any charge on my side; but I must take my loss as it is. After this, they went home, and slept the night through.

Next morning, the house-owner came to the lad, saying: "It is no wonder, if you are tired of working for me; nevertheless, I have made up my mind to trust you with a new task, which, I think, you will find easy to discharge. You shall watch forty head of cattle which belong to the king. But you must watch them with the greatest care, that none be lost, for one of the oxen has horns and hoofs inlaid with gold, and is the greatest of treasures to the king."

The lad undertook the task, seemingly in little cheer, and half unwilling. But when he had driven the beasts on to the pasture, they became very unruly, and the best ox ran before the others, roaring and jumping about wildly. The boy knew very well where the carl, his father, was wont to keep his cow on pasture, and therefore did his best to turn the oxen in that direction. He succeeded, and when the oxen saw the cow, the king's ox roared wildly, and ran off towards her, and the other oxen after him. Then the boy ran to the cow, and took her home to the stall at the cottage. The carl was at home, and saw a large herd of cattle rushing towards the stall, and his son amongst them, dragging the cow by a cord. The old man was half frightened, but went, however, to the stall, and asked his son what all this meant. The boy answered as he liked.

Then his father said: "Go as quickly as you can, home again to your master, with the oxen."

"Nay," said the lad, "you shall have them; you will get good beef from them, for they are very fat."

The old man used all sorts of excuses, but they were all rendered nought by the lad's entreaties, who at last persuaded his father to kill the beasts.

Now they killed them, one after the other, in a mighty hurry; the carl worked well, and indeed his strength must needs now shew itself. They did not leave off, until they had taken off the heads of all the cattle. Last of all, they took the king's ox and laid it down: the boy was charged with keeping the rope which held its head, but the brute pulled so violently and suddenly at the rope, that it snapped by the boy's hand. The ox jumped up, broke all his fetters, and flew over the slaughter-field in wild fury, with the boy after him. They ran over hills and rocks, into the wood, always with the same distance between them, till the ox came to a gulf in the land of the chief-herdsman. Leading to this gulf there were many rifts and deep cracks in the rocks. Into one of these the ox plunged, and the boy, when he came to the edge of it, had to wait long before he could hear the ox strike the bottom of it. When the ox had tumbled all the way down, the lad could hear it bellowing in its death-struggle. In his pocket the lad had lots of matches; he lighted them all and let them down to the bottom of the rift. After that he got some olive-oil, which he let down also, in a birch-bark, at which the fire at once caught, and when the lad saw that the hair of the ox was well alight, he ran off to his master as quickly as he could.

"You have been long out," said the house-owner; "but where are the oxen?"

The boy could scarcely utter a single syllable for sobbing, but when he was able to speak again, he said: " All goes astray with me,—they are gone."

" What!" cried his master, " Gone? You tell me a falsehood, you little wretch."

" Nay, I tell you the truth," said the lad. " When I had driven them into the pasture, they became so wild, that I could do nought to check them. The fine ox ran away at the head of the others, who followed him till they vanished. O, my master, they have undoubtedly gone down, for I came to a rocky gulf, where I thought I heard the sound of their roaring, especially that of the gold-horned ox. I also saw a fire burning down there, which I thought must have come from the evil-one, for the sulphur-stink rose up into my nose from beneath. And I was so afraid, that I ran off home.

Then the house-owner said: " If you have never told me a lie, you do so now."

" Nay," replied the lad, " you shall see clear proof of this, as soon as you will."

So they both went away, the boy foremost, to the gulf or rift before mentioned. Then said the boy, pointing out the hole to his master: " Do you see now?" The master looked, and saw a large fire burning at the bottom of the gulf, and smelt a bad stink of sulphur rising up from it. " What a marvel," said the man; " I see you tell me the truth, wherefore

I cannot blame you. I must bear my loss as it is, but it is indeed a heavy one. Let us now go home. You shall watch herds nevermore, but do some work which will go off with greater ease."

After this, they went home. Then came the house-owner to the boy, saying: "I have decided upon a task for you to-morrow. You shall make ten scythes for my labourers; for, when you have finished them, I am going to have my meadows mown."

At this, the boy was strangely startled, knowing that in the handicraft of a blacksmith he had no skill whatever; yet he dared not refuse to do the work. Then he went to bed. In the night, when all the folk were fast asleep, the lad rose from his bed, and making for the door of the house, succeeded in getting out. He ran off to the carl, his father, and the old wife, his mother, and told them the whole story. They received him and kept him hidden. His master had search made for him, but he was nowhere to be found. Now he became willing, and yielding to his parents: and time passed on, and the boy dwelt in the cottage.

Once he had a talk with his father, saying that he would like to marry.

"I do not find it wise," said the old man.

"Don't you?" answered his son. "Yes it is; for, when I was with the king's herdsman, I often saw his daughters, and the younger of them pleased me so, that I often thought in love of her, and now I will try to woo her."

"Be not so fool-hardy," said his father; "why, it would be your sure bane."

"That I will risk," replied the lad, and asked his father to give him a good sword, for the journey. This the carl refused him, at first, but was at last forced to give this to his son also. Now the youth went away, and came, late in the day, to the house of the over-herdsman. He knocked at the door, and a little boy came out. The carl's son sent in a message for the master of the house, who came out at once, and said: "Hah! there you are at last. The last time you got away somewhat suddenly, but you shall be allowed to stop here for the night."

"Well," said the lad, "but my errand is another one now."

And at that moment, he drew his sword, and said: "With this sword I will stab you on the spot, if you do not, at once, swear an oath, that you will give me your youngest daughter in marriage."

The herdsman did not dare but swear this, and the lad asked for the girl's answer, which was given him on this visit. After this, he fetched his old father and mother, and got them comfortably lodged at the head-herdsman's house. Then the marriage was held, and after the marriage, the son-in-law told the herdsman the whole story, which was afterwards heard by the king and queen. The king called the carl's son to him and made him tell the story himself; and when he had heard it, he made the carl's son his minister, giving him largely of money and other property. Then the old carl and woman went to their son, who lived with his wife, to a high age, in wealth and happiness.

THE STORY OF A MEAL-TUB.

ONCE an old man and his old wife lived together in a cottage. They were very poor, and had nothing for the support of their life, but a little tub, in which there was always plenty of meal. They had a son, but his name this story does not mention. These were the only three living beings in the cottage, and none beside. Although the cottagers found the meal rather a tiresome food for every day, yet the old man saw that they must keep the meal-tub, as it was the only thing that supported the lives of all three in the family. Once it so happened that a priest came, on a parish visit, to the cottage, and when he had done the duty of his office there, he talked on sundry matters with the man, and amongst other things, asked him how he could possibly live in this hut, wretched as it was. The carl bade the priest not mention it, saying that he led indeed a miserable life there. Now as the carl was fond of his priest, he could not help offering him meal from the tub, saying at the same time, that it was only by means of this grout-tub that they were able to live at all, it being of so strange a nature that, eat as much as one would out of it, the meal in it never dwindled. When the priest heard this, he wanted much to get the tub, saying that if the carl would exchange it for something else, he should not be worsted in the bargain. The carl answered that, although this eternal meal was a loathesome dish, yet he did not want to get rid of his tub. But, on the priest's pressing him for it yet more, the carl promised to send his son with it to him. After this, the priest went away, but the old carl and his wife were much grieved at the promise they had made; nevertheless, they sent their son with it, after some days, to the priest.

On the way was a royal castle, which the lad passed, going straight to the priest. In exchange for the tub, the priest gave him a cloth, saying that nothing was to be done with it, but spread it on the table, and say: "Cloth, cloth, be full of the best food," and one dish after another would come forth on the table. The priest told the boy that he must straight to his own home, and by no means stop at the king's castle. This he bade him remember well. The lad promised to do so, and went homewards. But when he was in the neighbourhood of the castle, a violent longing seized him, to visit it; he believed it would matter but slightly, if he looked about there a little. When he came there, he met the king's daughter, who asked him what he was travelling for. The boy did not keep well his secrets, and told her the whole business he was travelling for. When the king's daughter heard the cloth mentioned, she wanted the boy very much to sell it her. She bade him do this by all means for her, and said she would pay him its worth, many times over. By her promises he was induced to let her have the cloth, and giving it her, received for it glittering coins, how many we know not.

The lad was charmed with the fine sight of the money, and ran off with it home, thinking he had made a capital bargain. Not so, however, the carl, his father, who simply thought it a bad job, and reasonably supposed that the money would come to an end at some time. True enough; after a while there was no money left, and now he sent his son, for the second time, to the priest, begging him, by all means, to give him some relief, for now he had nothing left for his family to eat.

The lad went as before, and found the priest, who waxed angry, and chid him for having deceived him and gone to the castle. Then the boy told him all, as it had happened, and the priest thought he must do something towards relieving the needy people. He went away for a moment, and came back again, dragging after him by a cord a young mare, telling the lad he had only to say to it: "Shake, mare! Shake, mare!" And the mare would shake itself, and money roll from it all over. The priest bade the boy beware of going to the castle, and the other promised he would be sure not to do so.

Now he went off, and when he came to the neighbourhood of the castle, he could not resist his desire of going to it, fancying that now he would be sure to yield to no temptation that might meet him. Thus he went to the castle, and led the mare after him. This time, the king's daughter came, as before, towards him, and greeted him friendlily, and asked him why he was now faring. The boy forgot himself, and told her that the price he had got from her for the cloth had proved rather short-lasting, wherefore he had been obliged to go again to the priest, in order to get aid for his needy family. The priest, he said, had given him this mare, and one needed only to say to it: "Shake, mare! Shake, mare!" and money would drop from it all over.

When the king's daughter heard this, she became very fidgety and eager to get the mare, and asked the lad, with many sweet words, to sell it her, whatsoever its price might be, promising him a far better and larger price than at their first bargain. At last the boy yielded, and taking the money for his mare, ran home to Carls-cot, not telling anybody what had happened. The carl thought that certainly he had got a great deal of money from the priest, yet, as before, the coins came to an end, the quicker in that they had been spent in buying new clothes for the family; for the old man, not being used to money-reckonings, thought this supply would last long. Now, in due time, the carl had no money left, wherefore he sent his son to the priest for the third time.

The lad, knowing how he had brought about the whole business, was in very low spirits, and afraid of seeing the priest, who might, in all likelihood, chide him heavily and snub him well for his folly. He, however, plucked up his courage as he best could, and went to the priest, addressing himself to his Reverence as politely as possible, and praying him by no means to be angry with him, but to relieve his distress in some way or other. He said he had been unwise enough, against the other's warnings, to go into the castle, and had not been able to get away without yielding to the entreaties of the princess, to sell her the young mare. This time, the priest did not rebuke the boy, but going from him, returned soon, with a club in his hand, of large size, which he gave to the boy. He did not say of what use the club was, but, in order to have it perform its duty, he bade the lad say to it: "Up! up! club! Up! up! when you may!" The priest gave the lad no warning against going to the castle, but left him thus, and bade him farewell.

Now the boy was very cheerful, and went in merry mood on his way, thinking to himself: "The priest has given me no warning against going into the king's castle; well, I shall now call there once more, and see the king's fair daughter."

When he came to the castle, he needed not look long for the king's daughter, who had been on the watch for him. She went up to him, asking him, as before, what he was travelling for. He told her the whole truth; that he had gone, in his father's need, to ask the priest for some aid, and that the priest had been kind enough to give him this club. When it should work, the only thing needed, was to say to it: "Up! up! club! Up! up! when you may!" The king's daughter, thinking from this speech, that the club would work wonders and miracles, asked, at once, the boy to sell it her, and prayed him to do so, with great eagerness. Their bargain went off as the others had done, and the boy went home to his father, with the price for his club.

When the king's daughter had got possession of these things, she asked his leave to give a great feast, where she would shew all her precious things, and the wonders they wrought. To this the king gave his leave, and invited to the feast the greatest people in his kingdom, in such numbers, that his palace was quite filled with guests. When the guests had taken their seats, the king's daughter came at the fixed hour, and had the cloth spread, and wished upon it one dish after the other, and wine, and all the rest of it, till every one of the guests had had his fill. After dinner, some entertainment should follow for the guests, and the king's daughter had the young mare brought in. She said to it: "Shake, mare! Shake, mare!" Then the mare shook itself, and coins dropped from every hair on its body. This the guests found a great marvel, and it amused them mightily. But this was a trifling pleasure, compared with what would come next, said the princess, and she ordered the club to be brought in, and said to it: "Up! up! club! Up! up! when you may!" And up went the club, at the same moment, and broke, in the twinkling of an eye, everybody's skull who was present, save that of the princess.

But the carl's son, knowing what a grand feast was going on at the palace, had gone thither, in order to get some refreshments from the leavings of the rich table, and as the club created this havoc in the palace, he stood at the door. When he saw what the club had done, he rushed into the palace and seized it, saying to the king's daughter, that he gave her the choice between two things. "The first," he said, "is that you marry me; the second, if you refuse the first, that I bid the club treat your skull in the same way as you have bidden it deal with all these broken ones, lying about in the palace like hay."

The princess said she would take the first choice, and the carl's son wooed her at once. After that, he had the good priest to perform the wedding, and thus he became the king of those realms. When he had mounted the throne, he took the carl, his father, and his aged mother, to his palace, and thus gave them many a glad and joyful day in their old age. Thereafter, he governed his realms long and well. And further, we know not this story.

The Story of Hans, the Carl's Son.

There lived once, in their cottage, an old man and his wife, who had three sons. This story tells not the names of the two eldest, but that of the youngest was Hans. The father loved his two eldest sons, and petted them in every way, giving them leave to do anything they wished; but Hans was as much in his father's disfavour as the others were in his love. He never had any toys, nor was he allowed to have any familiar intercourse with his father or brothers. He used to lie in the kitchen, and was mostly with his mother, she being the only one in the cot who cared anything for him.

Now, as Hans was often forced to be alone, he began making friends with the cat in the cottage, and in this succeeded so well, that puss would follow him whithersoever he went.

Time passed on, till the brothers came of age. The elder ones thought themselves to be men of great importance, and were great dandies, and spirited fellows, and their father praised them for everything, but deemed Hans good-for-nothing at any achievement or manly task. His brothers also slighted him in everything, and thus everybody abused him, save his mother. She, alone of people, gave him friendly looks, not forgetting that she was his mother; and, on his side, Hans made all efforts not to lose her friendship and fondness.

Now it is told that, on the other side of a great channel, on the shore of which the cottage stood, there was a king's dwelling. Once the elder brothers went to their father, and asked his leave to go to this kingdom, in search of fame and honour. This the carl liked much, and said he had a foreboding that they would be very lucky. After this, when the carl knew that there had come, to a harbour on the coast, a merchant-vessel which was to leave again for the kingdom in question, he told his old wife to get ready provisions and new shoes for the elder brothers, for he was going to send them into the next realm, in search of fame and honour. The old wife did not dare disobey the order of her husband, and therefore fitted out her eldest sons, as well as she could. When Hans was aware of this, he had no rest, so earnestly did he wish to go away with his elder brothers. He therefore took courage, and went to his father, asking leave to go also. The carl at first said that he could not let him go, but as Hans was a hateful sight to him at home, when his elder brothers, the delight of his eyes, were gone, he said he would allow his going, but on condition that he should not go together with his other brothers, in order that they might not be disgraced by his company. This Hans thought a capital end of the matter, and ran to his mother, asking her for provisions and necessaries for the journey.

Now the other brothers got away as quickly as they could, for it was the chief thing with them to get off without Hans' being able to go with them. But Hans, on his side, made all possible speed, and got only fish-skins from his mother, for journey-provisions, but when he bade farewell to her, she gave him her poker, and told him to use it as a walking-staff. "And while you walk with it, I presume you shall not easily lose your way," she said. She also said that he must use it as a weapon when he had nothing better. After that, Hans bade farewell to his mother and father, and ran off as quickly as he could stretch his legs, to the place where he thought he should find a vessel, at the sea-shore. He would fain catch a glimpse of his brothers, but they had made such haste to get out of his reach, that he saw them nowhere. Hans, however, got on as quickly as he could, and when dusk came on, climbed a certain hill, whence he saw a vulture of mighty size, which he thought must be a dragon, flying with something in its claws. Hans hurled his poker after it, and hit it so well that it fell to the ground. He ran to the spot, seized his poker again, and slew the vulture. Then he looked at the thing he had seen in the vulture's claws, and found it to be a child, which began screaming loudly. He tried to soothe and comfort it, but could by no means do so, and he was now quite at a loss what to do. At this moment he saw a tiny man coming running, and out of breath. He greeted Hans kindly, and said he saw that he had done a good deed in saving his dear child; whereupon the tiny man took the child in his arms, and soothed it. This tiny man, who was nothing but a dwarf, asked Hans if he would not come home, and stop at his house that night through. Hans, being rather afraid that he should otherwise have to spend the night in the open air, on unknown wildernesses, accepted gladly the offer, and went home with the dwarf. They walked long, till they came to a large stone, which Hans remembered having passed in the day. The dwarf opened it, and they went in. Hans was well received here, but it is not told whether he saw more people in this stone-abode. In the evening Hans went to bed, and slept through the night; he heard, however, through his sleep, that the dwarf was engaged in some handiwork, all the night through. In the morning, when Hans was ready to leave, the dwarf said he was going to give him three trifling keepsakes, of no value compared with the saving of his child's life. First, the dwarf gave him a small stone, saying it was of such a peculiar nature that, when kept in the palm of the hand, no one could see the bolder of it. Next, he gave him a sword. "It will cut," said the dwarf, "and it can be made so small that you can put it in your pocket, but it will grow to its full size when you like."

Lastly, the dwarf gave him a ship which he could carry in his pocket; "But when you like," he said, "you can have it as large as you need, even as large as seaworthy vessels, and it is one of its powers, that it goes with equal speed against the wind and with it."

Hans took the things, and thanked the dwarf heartily for his gifts; after this, he bade him farewell, and taking the poker in his hand, went away. Now Hans took what he deemed the shortest cut over the land, towards the sea. And when he came to the sea, he took from his pocket, the vessel, and said: "Grow, ship!" and at the same moment launched it, and put to sea, only himself being on board. The ship moved off, and he steered towards the kingdom he wanted to reach. When he was in the open main, a great storm came on, and heavy sea. He saw how other vessels were driven about by storm and wave, but his own went on at its usual pace, as if all were calm and quiet, never stopping till it came to the kingdom. Then Hans went ashore, saying: "Lessen, ship!" and it became so small that he took it up and put it in his pocket. After that, he went into the country, but disguised himself while he made himself acquainted with the custom of the people, and learned the habits and ways of the inhabitants.

But, of his brother we must tell, that, as soon as they had got to shore in this kingdom, they went to the king himself, and asked for a stay with him during the winter. This the king granted, and now they were living at the court, very gay and spirited fellows.

Hans came to the court of the king. First he went about among the courtiers, and elsewhere in the palace, observing all, without anyone seeing him. Having gone about thus for a while, he stepped up to the king, and greeted him politely, and asked leave to stay at his court, the winter through; but his brothers behaved as if they had never seen him.

The king's only child was a daughter, who, at this time had come of age, but the king was already in the fall of his life.

Once it happened, when winter-nights drew near, that, all the courtiers being assembled in the hall, the king begged leave to speak, and having got a hearing, made it known to his court, that he would give his daughter and half his kingdom while he lived, but the whole after his death, to anyone who could obtain and bring him, before Christmas-eve next, the three things that were most costly in the world :—a chess-game of the purest gold ; a fine sword all inlaid with gold ; and a gilt bird with golden wings, in a glass cage, that sang when it was touched, so loud, that it could be heard from a great distance. These things, he said, were guarded by a troll-woman living in an island, not far from the palace, who kept them always above her bed.

The courtiers paid little attention to this, but the carl's elder sons said that this was not so dread a task, as not to be worth while trying, nor could they fancy it to be impossible. One of them requested the king, at once to give him a vessel and crew, that he might get out to the island. This, the king said, was ready ; and nothing more is said of the journey, till they arrived at the island. In broad daylight, the carl's son arrived at the island, but as he did not dare shew himself in the day, he lay down in a hidden place, waiting for dusk ; and thus he tarried till he thought the troll had fallen asleep. Then he stood up, and stole silently to the cave, and saw that the troll had gone to bed and fallen asleep. He thought to himself that he would do everything slowly, carefully, and quite noiselessly, and deemed it best to begin with the most difficult thing first, which was, undoubtedly, to get the bird. But, unluckily, he touched it unawares ever so little, and you may fancy how startled he was when the bird came out with such a loud shriek, that the whole cave resounded with its cry. The troll awoke from a bad dream, and rushed up and seized the carl's son, saying that his coming thither was a good chance, as she should certainly make a fat Christmas-meal of him. Then she took him into an out-cave, and fettered his feet, and tied his hands behind his back, and touching him all over, said he must be fed well, for, as he now was, there was not a good bit to be found on his whole body. After this, the troll strode from the cave, down to the sea, for now she knew that the king's men had come to the island, and hoped to have a bigger catch out of them than the lean carl's son. But when the crew saw the ogress coming in a fury, down towards the vessel, they speedily undid the land-cables and narrowly missed escaping in time for her not to catch them. She was, however, obliged to let them go, without getting more out of them. The king's men came home again, having no good news to tell of their voyage, and giving out as quite certain that the eldest carl's son would barely return with any of the precious things.

At this the second son got madly eager, and begged a vessel and crew of the king, for the voyage. The king granted his request; and of the journey of this brother all we have to tell is, that it fared with him entirely as with the first.

Shortly after the return of the second expedition, Hans vanished, and nobody knew whither he had gone. But he went to the sea, for the purpose of seeing the troll, as his brothers had done. He passed the channel on his ship, and then, putting it in his pocket, got up on to the island, keeping the stone in his closed hand, and walked on till he reached the cave. The troll had not yet got home, wherefore he hid himself in a corner.

Soon after, the troll-woman came into the cave, and sniffing in every direction, said: "Phew! Pah! Stink of men in my cave." She went, however, to bed, but could not sleep, and was ever repeating the words: "Phew! Pah! Stink of men in my cave." And, at last, unable to bear this any longer, she got up, and began groping and fumbling about in every nook of the cave. Hans saw that she would find him out, so he took forth his sword, the dwarf's gift, let it grow to its full size, and when the troll was within reach, dealt her a blow with it on the neck, so that her head fell off. The troll fell to the ground, and Hans made a pile and burned the body. After this, he ransacked the cave, and found therein a great many costly things besides those above mentioned. At one side, he found an out-cave, wherein were both his brothers. When they saw him, they were both amazed and humble, and prayed him, their good brother, to remember no more how they had dealt with him formerly, and to undo their fetters and chains. Hans said he would give them their freedom, if they promised to deal brotherly with him in future. This they promised solemnly. Then Hans set them free. Now they took as many as they could carry of the precious things and gems, and carried them off to the sea; and when they had removed everything of value that was in the cave, they loaded the good ship and sailed back to the kingdom; but in the town where the king lived, they did not shew themselves till Christmas-eve, when Hans went up to the king, with his brothers, and greeted him courteously. The king and his whole court were petrified with wonder, but all of them marvelled still more, when they saw Hans give the king the precious things he had wanted. The king said that there could be no dispute that Hans was his daughter's true bridegroom, as he had formerly decreed. After this, Hans was dressed in royal state-robes, and the king's daughter was fetched. Strong and good wine was brought in and put on the table, and the joy of the Christmas-feast enhanced by its being also the wedding-feast of Hans and the king's daughter. Afterwards, Hans fetched his parents, who spent with him, in the palace, a good and happy old age. But Hans himself now took part in the affairs of the government with his father-in-law, and, after the latter's death, became king, and made his brothers his advisers. He governed both well and long, and farther our story does not go.

The Story of Sigurdr, Sack-knocker.

There was once a wealthy king, who had two sons and one daughter. The king and his sons were as unwise, ignorant, and greedy, as the king's daughter was wise and accomplished. When the things told of in this story took place, the king was already an old man, and all his children were of age.

In a cottage, near the palace, there lived an old man with his wife. They had one son, by name Sigurdr. He was a good and hopeful youth, the wisest of men, and a clever smith. He had a forge, where he made sundry things for which he gained a good sum of money. After his father's death, he lived with his mother, and soon got heaps of money by his industry. The king's sons envied his gaining more money than they. Formerly they had had Sigurdr for their playmate, for he was nearly their equal in age. But when the princes grew older, they both waxed unsparing towards him in their sports, and treated him haughtily; but he again played them several tricks, and turned their folly to his advantage, as best he could.

Once the king's sons burned, at night, Sigurdr's forge, when he himself was not at home, in order to check his gaining money. When he came home, he saw what a black and bad trick some one had played him, as nothing was left of his forge but the ashes. He found out who had been the doers of this misdeed, and silently made up his mind to make them pay his loss dearly enough. He took two sacks, and filled them with ashes, and bound them up, and hung one on each side of a horse, and went with them into the forest. In the evening, he came to a farm belonging to the king, who kept there a manager and a housekeeper. These guarded many of the king's golden and other costly things, of which he would have nobody know the least. Sigurdr asked leave to stop there during the night, saying that he was the king's messenger, and brought with him such costly and rare things, that their match was not to be found in the whole world. He bade the manager take care that nobody touched the bags, and everyone present in the house promised to beware of touching them. The housekeeper was in the kitchen, and heard what Sigurdr said. She was, as Sigurdr well knew, very curious, and she went to the sacks, and, undoing one of them, emptied it outside the house. But the ashes were all blown away by the wind as soon as they fell from the sack, for it happened to be a high wind.

She waxed angry at this, and rushing to the second bag, emptied it; but all went the same way as the first. Now the housekeeper called the manager, and told him her mishap.

"This is," said he, "a most unfortunate deed; we are sure to lose our lives for your bad job."

She said that the best rede would be to fill the sacks again with the king's costly things and gold coins. This they did, and left the sacks in the same state as they had been in the evening. Next morning, Sigurdr went home with these loads, feigning that he neither knew nor guessed that anything had happened to his sacks.

Now he built his forge again, and gained money as before.

The king's sons got news of Sigurdr's having built him a new forge, and having become now far wealthier than before. They went to him, asking him how he had gained all his new wealth. He said he had sold all the ashes from the old smithy, and got for them their weight in gold. The king's sons thanked him for so ready and open an answer, and returned home glad in mind. Now they agreed upon burning the forge of the king's goldsmith, that they might get the same price for its ashes as Sigurdr for those of his smithy. Having carried out their plans, they gathered carefully all the ashes, and went with them where Sigurdr said he had sold his, and offered them for sale. But all they got for them was a mighty quizzing and scoffing, and they went home again loaded with shame, and painfully discontented with their journey. When they were at home, they said they would now give it to that rascal Sigurdr for his trick.

Sigurdr got news of their coming, and went to his stable with a purse full of golden coins. In the stable there was a mare that belonged to him. He strewed the money over the stable-floor, round the mare, and then began quietly gathering it up. While he was doing this, the king's sons came to the stable. Short greetings followed, as they began at once telling Sigurdr that he had duped them badly, and so badly, that they must take vengeance upon him for it.

Sigurdr guessed that it was ashes that they had said they had to sell. They said "Yes" to this.

"Ah, well! then it was no wonder that your business did not succeed," said he; "of course you should have added, as you said you had ashes to sell, that these ashes were from the gods. But now you must deservedly pay for your own folly."

Now the king's sons asked what Sigurdr was doing, "or do you gather this gold from the mare's dung?" they said.

"Yes, I do," answered Sigurdr.

Then they asked him to sell them the mare. To do this he was very unwilling. However, when they offered him enough money for her, he sold her to them. They then asked him what they should do with the mare, and he said that they should put her into a stable by herself, but give her no hay at all. After a fortnight, they should visit her, and then a large heap of gold, said he, would be found by her.

Now they walked off with the mare, and did everything that Sigurdr had told them, and sent him, that same evening, the great price they had paid for her. After a week, the king's sons looked through the stable-door, and saw the mare lying on the floor. And, at the end of the next week, they went to look after her, and were in the gayest hopes of gathering up large quantities of gold; but lo! they found the mare dead, with a large heap of dung by her, but no gold. Now they thought they were worse hoaxed than before, and that they would find Sigurdr, in a quiet hour, and give him what he wanted for his tricks.

When Sigurdr knew that they were coming, he took a lump of butter, and a cudgel in his hand, and going to a hillock in the field, knocked the butter about over the hillock with his cudgel. Then the king's sons came to him, scolding him for having cheated them in the mare-bargain.

Sigurdr answered: "Why, then, you must have looked into the stable before the fortnight had passed."

"Yes," they said, "we did so."

"Ah, well, then it is no wonder that the gold-producing power left her. You have none to blame but yourselves," said he.

Then they asked him why the hillock was all over butter. Sigurdr said that this cudgel had the magic power of turning hillocks that were beaten with it, into butter. They asked him kindly to sell them the cudgel. Sigurdr said he was unwilling to do it, because they would profit as little by the cudgel as by the mare, on account of their folly. But they begged and entreated him to sell them the cudgel, and at last they got it for some unheard-of price, and went home, happy at having made this good bargain.

When they came home they began turning hillocks into butter, and knocked the hillocks well with the cudgel, and earth and mould sprang up at every blow, in plenty, but no butter. When they next saw Sigurdr, they told him the history of the cudgel had all been a hoax, and called upon him to give back the money he had got for it.

Sigurdr answered: "I am sure that you have beaten with it, in pauses and stops."

They said it was true.

"Hah! no wonder then, that its nature left it. It has gone as I thought it would."

After this, the king's sons went home, and had a talk with their fostermother, and told her all about their dealings with Sigurdr. She was a wise woman, and said they had better try to have as little as possible to do with Sigurdr; it would be late ere they got the best of him. At this, the brothers were ill-pleased, and went to their father, and asked him to have Sigurdr killed. This the king promised readily to do, and went, with his courtiers, to the cottage. Sigurdr was aware of the visit beforehand, and went to his mother, saying: "Now the king is coming here. Dress as well as ever you can, and sit down on the middle of the floor, and I will cover you over with a heap of rags, and when the king comes to the window and looks in, I shall tell you that I am going to make you shed your age-shape. I will take a bag full of wind, and thump you with it, and at the blow you must fall flat on the floor; but I will tell you to get up and shake yourself. Then you shall stand up at once, and the rags will fall off you, so that you will look younger than before, in the king's eyes."

When the king came to the window of Sigurdr's room, he heard some one inside saying: "Now I will have you shed your age-shape, my mother." The king walked into the cottage at once, saying he should like to see how that was done.

"If you shew me this, you shall live," said the king, "in spite of my having before made up my mind to kill you."

Sigurdr did not understand what he had done to deserve death, but the king was welcome, he said, to see how he did this; and then he did all that he had before told his mother. At this the king marvelled much, and said that Sigurdr should, from this time, have the name of "Sack-knocker," and have the head which he had forfeited, as a name-gift.

Thereupon the king went to his men, and told them what he had heard and seen, and that he wanted very much, for curiosity's sake, to try the plan on others, himself. His sons were very fond of their fostermother, and begged their father to let her be the first to shed her age-shape. This the king promised them, and they all went home. The good lady was then ordered to sit down in the middle of the floor; the king filled a sack with stones, and gave the old woman a mighty knock with it on the side of her head. The blow broke her skull, of course. But the king, not even dreaming of this, said, as Sigurdr had done before: "Get up, old woman, and shake yourself." The old woman, however, moved neither leg nor limb. The king then ordered his people to raise her up, when it was found that she was as dead as a stone. Now the king saw that he had been Sigurdr's dupe, and said he would be sure to have him killed ere long.

Soon after, the king had one of his oxen killed, and stood over it himself while it was being slaughtered. Sigurdr came there, and was received by the king with truly royal abuse, of the blackest dye, for his cheats; for the old woman whom he had wanted to shed her age-shape, had got a broken skull, instead of a renewed life.

"Well," said Sigurdr, "then you must have had stones in the sack."

"Yes, I had," said the king.

Quoth Sigurdr: "I had wind only, and I thought you would have observed it; wherefore I can bear no blame at all, for your mishap."

The king saw that Sigurdr had the truth to speak, and so dropped the matter.

After this, Sigurdr said to the king: "It was my errand hither, sire, to ask you to give me the guts from the ox."

"What are you going to do with them?" asked the king.

Sigurdr answered: "I hang them in the kitchen for a fortnight, and another fortnight I hang them over my bed, and then I cut a hole in the loop that hangs down, and put a pipe into it, and drink the liquor from the guts, fasting, in the early morning. After that, I know everything on the earth and in it."

The king said he would give him half the guts, but the other half of them he would keep for himself. Sigurdr must needs put up with this, and going away with half the guts, did with them as he liked. But the other half the king did with as Sigurdr had told him. After a month, one morning, the king drank, fasting, from the guts, and although he found it not a palatable drink at all, yet he thought it well worth while to get the knowledge of everything. Such an effect, however, had this drink upon the king, that, instead of being wiser, he fell ill from all this, was thrown on his sick-bed, and died shortly after. He was put into a cairn, agreeably to the old custom. His sons took to themselves the whole kingdom, leaving nothing for their sister, but she was ill-pleased with their injustice, and few-spoken to them. The brothers charged Sigurdr with having killed their father, and would take vengeance upon him for it.

One day, therefore, they went to the cottage in a revengeful mood, but Sigurdr was not then at home, and when his mother refused to tell them where he was, they took her and broke her neck, and then went home. in great pride at the good vengeance they had taken upon Sigurdr.

Now Sigurdr, on coming home, found his mother dead, and guessed who were the doers of this. He took the body, washed it, and anointed it, and dressed it up in gaudy attire; saddled a horse, and putting his mother on it, took the horse with him into the forest. Here he met with the man who watched the oxen belonging to the brothers. All the oxen surrounded the horse, sniffing at it, and made it so shy that it took fright and started off furiously, so that the body fell from the saddle. Sigurdr went to it, and looking at it, made believe to be greatly startled at seeing it dead, and screamed out loudly: "O! what a mishap! unfortunate man that you are, to drive the oxen towards me; you have now, by frightening the horse, caused my mother a fall from its back, that has broken her neck and killed her. If you care at all for your life, your only chance is to run away immediately."

The ox-keeper ran out of sight as quickly as possible, but Sigurdr buried his mother on the spot, and drove the oxen home. The brothers got news of Sigurdr's having obtained many oxen, and went to him, to ask him how he had got them. Sigurdr said he had bought them for the corpse of his mother, from the neighbouring king. At this the brothers returned, and on their way home, made up a plan for killing their mother, in order to sell her body for oxen. This plan was the more readily adopted, as they found her very old, and saw that she would last but a short while yet, in this life. They, therefore, drowned her in a bath, and went with her body to the king of whom Sigurdr had spoken to them, and offered him the body for sale, for oxen. When the king knew the story, and how matters stood with these fellows, he waxed mighty angry, and said: "Do you believe, mean villains that you are, that I am a cannibal? Will you add to your heinous fault yet one meanness more, that of treating me with mockery? You have indeed deserved that I should have you both killed; and the only thing that hinders me from doing so, is the friendship I have always entertained towards your father. But, wretches! be off, as quickly as you can, out of my realms."

They did so, and came back home, greatly disappointed and ill-pleased with the whole affair.

While the brothers had been abroad on this last journey, Sigurdr had come to the king's daughter, and spoken to her of the villany and injustice of her brothers. She bade him not describe her brothers to her, but rather give her some good advice how to get them to grant her equal rights with themselves. He answered, that she should take things coolly, and not act in any hurry in the matter, as he thought her brothers would not be very long-lived after this. They then parted in great fondness and love.

When the king's sons came home, they attacked Sigurdr, made him prisoner, put him into a sack, carried him to a spot where sheer rocks stretched up from the sea, and, driving a pole into the soil above the rocks, tied a cord to it and to the sack, which they let over the edge of the rocks, saying that there should it hang while Sigurdr gave up his wretched life.

Thereupon they went home, leaving Sigurdr behind in the sack.

Before they had made him prisoner, Sigurdr had succeeded in seizing his harp, which he put into his pocket. Thus he had it with him in the sack, when he began playing it for his amusement. As he was playing, the herdsman of the king's sons came to the spot, and, hearing the music, asked him in the sack what he was doing.

Sigurdr answered: "Leave me in peace; I sing here for drawing money out of the rock."

But the herdsman hauled him up and drove him out of the sack, not listening in the least to Sigurdr's remonstrances and defence, which was a very weak one on Sigurdr's part.

Now the herdsman took the harp, himself, and jumped into the sack, and rolled himself over the edge of the rock, and began singing. But, when the gold would not come to him as he had reckoned upon its doing, he repented sorely his foolish over-hastiness, but could not get up again.

In his turn, Sigurdr took all the sheep of the herdsman, and drove them to his own home. On the way he saw the brothers coming back to the place where they had left him. They had returned, in order to take up the pole, and let the sack, with Sigurdr in it, drop into the sea; for, on their return home, it had come into their minds that Sigurdr might perhaps somehow make good his escape. They did therefore as they intended, and returned home again, glad and joyful at having, at last, got the best of Sigurdr. But Sigurdr, seeing their faring, threw himself into a brook, and made himself wet from head to foot; and then, dripping with water as he was, drove his flock on, so as to come in the way of the king's sons. When they saw him, they glared wildly, not believing their own eyes that they saw Sigurdr alive.

But he said to them: "You have done well in throwing me over the rock, into the sea, for beneath there is a large cave, full of sheep, and from that cave I drive this flock. But my misfortune was, that I was alone, for there are a great many more left." The brothers begged him to come with them to the rocks, for they would fetch the rest. Sigurdr bade them not do this, for the sheep were his own property, since he had found them; and he would take them out, time after time, as he wanted them.

Hearing this, the brothers waxed greedier than before, and said he should come with them, whether he would or no, for else they threatened to illtreat him. He yielded, but unwillingly as he made believe; and when the younger brother came to the rocks, he said to the elder: "I am going first down, and if there be so many sheep as Sigurdr tells us, I will call you."

This the elder quite agreed to, and thrust his brother over the edge. The latter, in the fall, became frightened, and screamed awfully. Then Sigurdr said he was calling his brother, and the elder at once jumped over the rock too, and thus both lost their lives.

Thereupon, Sigurdr went home to the king's daughter, and told her how matters stood with her brothers, and she did not regret it at all. Then Sigurdr wooed her, and she consented to marry him, and the wedding-feast was forthwith held, in great joy and splendour, and Sigurdr was made king over the whole kingdom. He governed, thereafter, long and well; and here ends this story.

The Story of Brjám.

Once it happened that a king and queen governed their realm. They were rich and wealthy, and scarcely knew the number of their precious things, or the extent of their riches. They had one daughter, who was brought up as most other story-children At that time, nothing happened there, in the way of titles or tidings, news or rumours, save it be lied.

In Wall-nook there lived an old man, with his old wife. They had seven sons, and one cow to support the whole lot. This cow was so good, that she must be milked three times a day, and at noon she came, of her own accord, home from her pasture.

Once the king chanced to be hunting with his swains. They rode by the cows that belonged to the king, and the carl's cow was there too. The king said: "What a fine cow I have there!"

"Nay, Sire," said the swains, "it is not your cow; it is the cow that belongs to the carl in the cot."

The king answered: "It shall be mine."

After that, the king rode home. But when he had sat down to drink, he mentioned the cow, and would send his men to the carl, to ask him to exchange it for another. The queen prayed him not to do this, as the others had nothing to support themselves, beside the cow. This, however, he did not listen to, and sent three men to bargain with the carl. He and all his children happened to be out when the messengers came. They brought him the message from the king that he would buy his cow for another.

The carl answered: "The king's cow is not dearer to me than mine is."

They pressed him, but he was determined not to give up his cow, and, at last, the king's men killed him. Then all the children began weeping, but the eldest son, by name Brjám. The messengers asked the children where they felt the greatest pain. All the children slapped their breasts, save Brjám, who slapped his behind with a cold and silly smile. Then the king's men killed all the children that had slapped their breasts, but said there was nothing lost by letting Brjám live, for he was a mad wretch. The king's men then went home, and took with them the cow. But Brjám went in to his mother, and told her the news, to her great grief and sorrow. He bade her not weep, for they gained so little by it; he should try to do what he could.

Once it happened that the king had made a bower for his daughter, and had given to the builder plenty of gold, to gild it both inside and out. Brjám came hither, behaving like a fool, as his wont was. Then said the king's men to him: "What good do you say to this, Brjám?"

He answered: "Lessen measure much, my fellows!" and went away.

But the gold they had got to gild the bower with shrunk so much, that it was only enough for half the building. They told the king this, and he thought they had stolen the gold, so had them all hanged.

Then Brjám went home, and told his mother all. She answered: "You should not have said that, my son."

He asked: "What should I then have said, my mother?"

She replied: "You should have said, 'Grow three thirds!'"

"I shall say it to-morrow, my mother," quoth Brjám.

Next morning, he met some people carrying a body to the grave. They asked him: "What good words have you to say to this, Brjám?"

"Grow three thirds, my swains!" he said. Then the corpse grew so quickly, that the carriers dropped it to the ground. Brjám went home and told his mother.

She said: "This you should not have said, my son."

He asked: "What should I then have said, my mother?"

"'God grant peace to thy soul, thou dead!' you should have said," replied his mother.

"I will say it to-morrow, my mother," answered he.

Next morning he went to the palace of the king, and saw a barber, one of the king's folk, engaged in strangling a dog. He went up to him, and the barber said: "What good words have you to say to this, Brjám?"

He answered: "God grant peace to thy soul, thou dead!"

At this the barber laughed, but Brjám ran off to his mother, telling her what had happened.

She said: "Thus you ought not to have spoken."

"What should I then have said?" he asked her.

She answered: "You should have said, 'Why, is this the king's wretched thief, which you are handling there?'"

"I will say it to-morrow, my mother," quoth he.

He went to the palace next morning, and it so happened that the king's men drove the king's queen round the city. Brjám stepped up to them. "What good words have you to say to this, Brjám?" said they.

"Why, is this the king's wretched thief that you are handling there, my swains?" said he.

But they scolded him. The queen bade them not do so, nor do the boy any harm. He ran home to his mother, and told her.

She said: "You should not have said so, my son."

"What should I then have said?" asked he.

She answered: "You should have said, 'Why, is this the life that is the pride of the king, which you are handling now, my swains?'"

"I shall say it to-morrow, my mother," answered the son.

Next morning he went toward the palace, and found two of the king's men occupied in flaying a mare. He walked to them and said: "Why, is this the life that is the pride of the king, which you are handling now, my swains?"

They hooted at him, and he ran off to his mother, and told her all. She said: "Do not go thither any more, for I know not when they may take it into their heads to kill you."

"Nay, my mother, they will not kill me," said he.

Once it so happened that the king had ordered his men to row out fishing. They were going out in two large boats. Brjám came to them and asked them to allow him to go with them. But they drove him, with loud scoldings, away. They asked him, however, how he thought the weather would be to-day. He looked now up at the sky, and now down at the ground, and said: "Wind and not windy, wind and not windy, wind and not windy." But they laughed at him. Then they rowed out to the fishing-bank, and loaded both boats with fish. But when they turned to row ashore, a storm arose, and both boats were lost.

Now nothing of note happened, till the king bade all his friends and favourites to a grand banquet. Brjám asked his mother to give him leave to go to the palace, that he might see how the banquet went off. When all had taken their places at the richly-furnished tables, Brjám went to the smithy, and began shaping small pieces of wood with his knife. Those who saw him doing this, asked him what he meant by it. He answered: "Avenge father, not avenge father." They said: "Indeed you do not look unlikely to do so!"

He drove sharp spikes of steel into the ends of his pieces of wood, and then stole, on the sly, into the guest-room, and nailed quietly to the floor the clothes of all who sat at table, and then walked off. But when they would stand up in the evening, they were all fixed to their seats; one charged the other with having done this, and at last it came to riot, and one killed the other, till none were left alive.

When the queen heard this, she was very sorry, and had the dead people buried. That morning, Brjám came back to the palace, offering his services as the queen's servant. She was glad to get him, in her want of servants. He discharged his duty well, and, at last, married the king's daughter, became king in that realm, and laid aside all his foolish manner. Thus ends this story.

THE STORY OF THE OLD WOMAN'S DISTAFF-KNOB.

ONCE there lived in a cottage, an old man and his old wife. They were so poor, that they had nothing in their possession, of any value, but a golden knob on the old woman's distaff. It was the old man's custom, every day, to go out fishing or hunting, in order to get for them means of living.

A short way from the carl's cottage there was a large mound, and it was a common belief that in this mound dwelt a hid-man, whom they called Kidhús, and who was thought to be a tricky fellow.

Once, as usually, it happened that the old man went out hunting, but the old woman sat, as she was wont, at home. As the weather was mild, she went out with her distaff, and span with it for a while. Then the golden knob chanced to fall off the distaff, and, rolling along the ground, got out of the old woman's sight. She searched and searched, but search as she would, she could not find her knob, and so lost it utterly. After this, the carl came home, and the goodwife told him her mishap. The carl said that Kidhús must, of course, have taken the knob, as it was just like him to do so. Now the carl busked from home, and told his old wife that he was going to ask the knob from Kidhús, or else something instead of it. At this the old thing, his wife, got somewhat easier about her knob.

Now the old man went his way towards the mound of Kidhús, and, with a club he had in his hand, thumped the mound violently all over. At last Kidhús said:

"Who creates here such a knocking,
That my house is all a-rocking?"

The carl answered:

"'Tis I, old Kidhús; dost thou hear?
To claim for old woman, now and here,
Something for her knob, so dear."

Kidhús asked what he would have for the knob. The carl asked for a cow that gave, morning and evening, twenty pints each time of milking. This request Kidhús granted him, and after that the old man went home with the cow to the cottage, to his old wife. Next day, when she had milked the cow one evening and one morning, she took it into her head to make stir-about, but then she remembered that she had nothing, in the way of flour, to strew into it. She went to the carl, and bade him go to Kidhús and ask for flour. The carl went to Kidhús, and thumped the mound all over, as before. At last Kidhús said:

"Who creates here such a knocking,
That my house is all a-rocking?"

The carl answered:

"'Tis I, old Kidhús; dost thou hear?
To claim for old woman, now and here,
Something for her knob, so dear."

Kidhús asked what he would have. The carl asked him to give him flour to strew in his pot, for he and his old wife were going to make a stir-about for themselves. Kidhús gave a barrel of flour to the carl, who took it home, and the old wife made the stir-about. When it was properly done, they sat down and eat as much as they could of it. When they had eaten their fill, they had yet a good deal left in the pot. Then they began discussing what to do with the leavings. They thought they could get rid of them in no way better than by giving them to their saint Mary. But they soon found that it was no easy run to get up to where she was. And they agreed to ask Kidhús for a ladder that reached up to heaven, fancying it were no over-paying for their golden knob, if he did this. The carl went and knocked at Kidhús's knoll. Kidhús asked as before:

"Who creates here such a knocking,
That my house is all a-rocking?"

The carl answered:

"'Tis I, old Kidhús; dost thou hear?
To claim for old woman, now and here,
Something for her knob, so dear."

At this, Kidhús grew peevish, and said: "Why, is that knob never paid dearly enough?" But the carl entreated him and begged him to add the ladder to the other payments, saying he was going to take to his St. Mary the stir-about leavings, in two pails. Hearing this, Kidhús yielded at last, and raised the ladder up for the carl. At this the old man was heartily pleased, and returned home to the old wife. They busked as well as they could, and then left with the stir-about pails. But when they had climbed to a good height, they began to be giddy, and so giddy grew they, that they fell down and broke their skulls so violently as to sprinkle their brains and the stir-about all over the world. Wherever the brains of the carl and his wife fell on stones, they were changed into white scales, but from the stir-about came yellow ones. And both are yet to be seen on stones and rocks.

The Tale of a Butter-tub.

There lived a king and queen in their realm, and a carl and his old wife in their cottage.

Once the carl and his old wife bought for themselves a barrel full of butter, which they intended to have for their household use during the winter, but now they were at a loss where to hide the barrel, that nobody should steal out of it. At last they agreed upon having it kept at the king's palace. They readily got the king to undertake the guarding of their tub, but its owner put it into its right place, and covered it as they thought fit.

Now the autumn approached, and the old wife began to feel eager for some of the butter, and contrived at once a plan for getting her longing satisfied. One day, in fine weather, she was up early in the morning, and came in to her carl, saying she was called to the king's palace, to hold a child at baptism, wherefore she must go there. The carl said it was a matter of course. Now the old wife got ready in the greatest hurry and went to the king's palace. When she came there she said she should fetch a tiny slice of butter from the barrel. This everyone believed to be true, and she was let in to where the tub stood. Then the old woman took a great pat from the brim of the tub. After that she went home. Then asked the carl what had been the name of the child at the king's. The old woman answered: "Brimmy is hight the well-shaped girl."

When the old woman had finished what she had first taken of the butter, she said one morning to her husband: "Eh! I am called yet once again to the king's."

"Well, go then," said the carl.

The old woman went away, and said at the king's as formerly, that she should fetch butter from the barrel. And this time, the old dame took butter away down to the middle of the tub. When she came home, the carl asked what was the name of the child. She answered: "Middle, is called the little girl."

When the old wife had finished this provision of butter, she said to the old man: "Yet, once more, am I called to the king's, to hold a child at baptism."

"Go then," quoth the carl.

The old wife went, and coming to the king's palace, said she came for butter. Now she took so much, that she could see the corner which the staves made with the bottom of the tub. When she came home, the carl asked her what was the name of the child. She answered: "Logg, is hight the ugly girl."

Now time passed, till the old wife was, once more, in need of butter. Then she said to the old man: "I am called for, once more, at the king's."

"Go then," said the old man.

The old woman went, and said, as formerly, that she had come for butter. This time, she took all that was left in the barrel. When she came home, the carl asked what was the name of the child. "Bottom is hight the stubby swain," said the old woman.

Time passed, till the later months of winter came on. Then the household provisions of the old man and woman began to be rather scarce. The old man said to his old wife, that it would be best to fetch the butter-tub from the king's palace. To this, the old woman agreed. They came there and asked for their barrel. It was given to them, and they saw that the covering and everything about the barrel was quite in order. They rolled the barrel home, into the cottage. Now the carl opened the barrel, and lo! it was quite empty. He was rather startled at this, and asked his wife if she could tell the cause of it. She made believe to be no less astonished, and could find no reason for the trick they had been played. But, at the same moment, the old wife saw a big fly, which had got into the open barrel, and she said: "Ah! there comes the wretched thief. Look here. This hateful fly has, doubtless, eaten all our butter from the tub. This, the old man thought must be true, and ran off for the big hammer, with which he used to beat his dried fish, and would break the skull of the fly. He shut the door of the cottage, that the fly should not get out, and now chased the fly all over the place, knocking and beating at it, but never hitting save his own furniture and household chattels, which he broke to pieces. At last, the old man, being tired, sat down in fury and despair. But then the fly came and sat on his nose. Then the carl begged his wife to kill the fly, and said: "Make haste, while it sits on the nose!"—which since has passed into a common saying. The old woman lifted up, with all her might the hammer, and thumped it on the old man's nose, and broke his skull so well that he was dead on the spot; but the fly escaped with unbroken skull. It is unscathed yet. But the old woman is still wailing over her carl.

GREY-MAN.

THERE were once, a king and queen in their palace, and a carl and his old wife in their cot. The king was wealthy in herds and cattle; he had one daughter, alone of children, who lived in a costly bower with her maidens. The carl was poor; he had no child, and the only support for him and his old wife was a cow.

Once, the old man went to church, and the priest had taken as a text to preach from, the virtue of generosity and the promise it had. When the old man came home from the church, his old wife asked him what good things he had to tell her from the preaching. The old man said that there were a great many good things to be told from it, for, to-day it had been a delight to listen to the priest, as he had said that whosoever gave, should receive a thousandfold again. The old woman thought this rather too much, and said she fancied that her husband must have heard wrong, or that he had not attended properly to the priest's words. The old man was quite sure that he had listened well, and she doubted it, and so they quarrelled about it for a while, both sticking to their own views of the matter.

The next day, the old man hired numbers of workmen to build for him a cowhouse, enough for one thousand cows. This, the old woman did not at all like; she called it folly, and would not have it, but nothing could dissuade the old man from his purpose.

When the building of the cowhouse was finished, the old man began thinking about to whom he should give his cow. He knew none rich enough to give him a thousand cows for it, save the king himself; but to go to him in person, the old man had no courage. At last he decided upon going to the priest, for he knew that he was well off, and thought he would be the last to let his own words come to nought.

Now the carl went off, leading his cow in a cord, to the priest, and paying no heed to his wife's against-words. He found out the priest, and gave him the cow. The priest wondered at this, and asked him what he meant by it. The carl told him all his reason for doing so. The priest grew peevish, and rebuked the carl for wrongly listening and for hair-splitting mistreatment of his words, and drove him away back, with his cow. The carl went back, dragging his cow after him, but highly ill-pleased with the upshot of his journey. But, on the way home, he was overtaken by a coal-black north-snowstorm, and hard frost. He lost his way, and thought he must, without doubt, lose his cow, and, likely enough, lose his own life too. While he was thus thinking about his difficulties, a man came towards him, walking with a large bag on his back. The man asked how the carl came to be travelling with a cow, here in such weather. The carl told him the whole reason for it. The stranger said he would be sure to lose the cow, and it was very doubtful whether he would escape the storm alive.

"It is far better for you," he said, "poor old man, to give the cow up to me, in exchange for this sack, which you can easily carry on your back; it holds only flesh and bones."

Now, whether they had a long or short discussion about this, the bargain was made. The stranger took away the cow, and the carl walked off with the sack; but he found it fearfully heavy. When he got home, he told his wife how it had fared with the cow; but about the bag, he was mightily puffed-up and proud. The old woman, on hearing the story, grew very cross with her carl, but he bade her not be angry, and rather put on the hearth a big pot with water in it. She put on the biggest of all her pots, and filled it with water. When the water boiled, the carl began undoing the mouth of the bag, and busy enough he was, and proud of his bargain. But when he had opened it, up jumped from it a full-grown man, dressed in grey clothes from head to foot, and said they had better boil something else, than him. The old man sat, astonished, but his old wife said: "Ah, there! that is just like you, fool that you are! First you have deprived us of the only beast that supported our lives, so that now we are utterly without support, and then you have added a whole man to the family, to be fed."

Now the carl and his wife quarrelled for some time about this, until Grey-man said that this would not do at all. He would go out in search of something to eat, for them all, for this grumbling would be food of little nourishment to them.

Now Grey-man ran away into the darkness, and came soon back again with a full-grown fat wether, which he bade them kill and make a good dish out of. At first they had great unwillingness to do this, saying they knew well that the wether must be stolen. Yet they yielded at last.

Now, in the cot, folk lived a high life while they were eating the wether, and when it was finished, Grey-man fetched another, then a third, fourth, and fifth. For this, the old couple liked much the Grey-man, and they lived now richly upon real good mutton.

The story now turns to the king's court. The king's herdsman was soon aware that wethers were missing from the flock. He did not understand this, and once told the king that five wethers were missing. These, he said, had been lost, one after the other, he knew not how, but he thought there must be some thieves in the neighbourhood. Then the king began to find out whether any person had lately moved into the parish, and discovered at last, that to the carl and his wife in the cot, there had come a man, of whom nobody knew anything. He sent a message to the man, to come and appear before him in the court. Grey-man went at once, but the man and his wife feared that they should lose their supporter, as he must, thought they, be hanged for his theft.

When Grey-man appeared at court, the king asked him if he had stolen from him five wethers, fat and full-grown, which were now missing from his flock.

Grey-man answered: "Yes, Sire, that I have done."

Then the king asked why he had done so.

Grey-man answered: "I did so, because the old carl and his old wife in Wall-nook were dying from want, having nothing whatever to their hand in the way of food; but you, king, have abundance of everything, and far more than you use, being unable to consume more than a tithe of your food-stores. Now, it seemed to me far more just, that the carl and his old wife should have something from that which you did not use, than that they should starve, while you had more than you wanted."

The king was half-startled at Grey-man's words, and asked if it was his only or his best accomplishment, to steal.

To this Grey-man gave a vague answer. Then the king said he would pardon him, if he could, to-morrow, steal his five-year-old ox, which he was going to make his folk take out into the forest. "But, if you cannot do it," said the king, "you shall be hanged."

Grey-man said that this was a plain impossibility, for the king would tell his people to watch it. The king answered, that he should be ready for that.

Now Grey-man returned home, and was fondly welcomed by the carl and his old wife. Grey-man told the carl to have in readiness for him a rope, for he was going to use it early to-morrow. Carl did as the other bade him, and all slept quietly the night through.

Next morning, Grey-man got up, took the rope, and went away. He went into the forest, where he knew the king's men must pass, and, turning to a large oak by the wayside, hung himself in it by the rope. Soon after, the king's men came passing by with the ox. When they came to the oak, they looked, and saw where Grey-man was hanging, and said: "Ah, Grey-man has surely played his tricks on somebody else besides the king, for there some one has hung him up. We shall scarcely have to fear that he will now steal our ox." After this, they paid no more attention to the thief, but went on their way.

When the king's men had passed out of sight, Grey-man got down from the oak, and running through a hidden path, a good long way past the king's men, hung himself up again in an oak by the wayside. The king's men, coming then, saw, to their great astonishment, Grey-man hanging there again. This they could not understand at all. "Is it possible that they are two, these wretched Grey-men?" they said to one another. "It would be curious to know for certain; let us run back and see how the other Grey-man is, and if he is the same as this one." So they tied the ox to an oak, and went back. But, when a hill hid them from sight, Grey-man jumped down from the oak, and took the ox with him to Carl's-cot, as quickly as he could. He bade the carl and his old wife slaughter the ox speedily, and skin it, without splitting the skin, and make candles out of the fat. At this there was great glee in the carl's cot.

Now we must return to the king's men. When they came to the oak whereon the first Grey-man had been hanging, there was no Grey-man to be seen at all. Then they ran to the other oak, but there they found nothing either, for no Grey-man was there, and the ox had already vanished from the oak to which he had been tied. Now, for the first time, the king's men saw what trick Grey-man had played them, and went home and told the king how matters stood. The king ordered Grey-man at once to appear before him, and the carl and his old wife became deadly frightened, for now, they thought, surely and without mercy, would Grey-man be hanged. But Grey-man, taking the matter very coolly, went to the king at once. Then said the king: "Did you steal my ox, Grey-man?"

"Yes, Sire," answered the thief, "I had need to do so, in order to save my life, as you know."

Then the king said: "I will pardon you this time, if you will steal, to-night, the sheets from the bed of myself and my queen."

"Why, nobody can do that, you know; for however should I manage to get into the palace?" said the other.

"That you must tell yourself," said the king; "but I tell you that your life is at stake."

At this they parted, and Grey-man went home to Wall-nook. Carl and his old wife thought they had got him again from the jaws of death, and received him with great joy. Now Grey-man took some few pounds of flour, and asked the old wife to make for him a stir-about rather thick. When she had done this, Grey-man put the stir-about into a little pail, with a lid over it, so that it should not cool too quickly. After this, he walked off with the pail, and got into the king's palace, on the sly, so that nobody saw him, and hid himself in a dark corner. Soon, the king's court was strongly bolted, for it was not meant that Grey-man should get inside for nothing. But when Grey-man knew that all the people in the court were fast asleep, and also the king and queen, he stole silently to their bed, and moving the bed-clothes off them, down to their waists, poured the stir-about gently down between the king and queen, and then got away into a corner of the room. When the stir-about touched the queen, she was startled and awoke the king, saying: "What is this you have done in the bed, my love?" The king would not confess to having done it, and they quarrelled a little about it, till at last they took the sheets from the bed, and flung them on the floor. And then they went to sleep again.

Now Grey-man took the sheets, and rolled them up under his arm, and walked off with them to the carl's cot, and bade the old folk clean the stir-about out of them, and then use them for their own bed.

Next morning, when the king and queen awoke, they saw that the sheets were gone. The king understood how it was then; that Grey-man would, most likely, have stolen them. He caused him to be called for, and the carl and his wife, thinking that he was called away to be hanged, bade a long and last farewell to him. Grey-man walked, without delay, up to the king, who asked him: "Did you, Grey-man, steal the sheets, last night, from the bed of myself and my queen?"

"Yes, Sire," said he, "I was forced to do so, for I must needs save my own life."

"Well," answered the king, "I will pardon you, if you will, to-night, steal both myself and my queen from our bed. But if you do not succeed, you shall be hanged without mercy."

"Nobody can do that," said Grey-man.

"That I leave with you," replied the king.

After this, they parted, and Grey-man went home to Wall-nook. He was heartily welcomed by the carl and his old wife, who thought he had returned from unavoidable death. In the evening, when it was dark, Grey-man put on his head a hat which belonged to the carl; it had an immensely high and broad crown, and a very broad brim. He pierced with holes, through and through, both the crown and the brim, and stuck into them candles that had been made of ox's fat; and besides these, he fixed a countless number of candles to his clothes, all over his body, from head to foot. In this attire, with the hat on his head, and an ox-skin sack in his hand, he went to the king's court, and into the chapel, where he put down the sack in the choir. Then, lighting all the candles, he went to the bells and rang them well. The king and his queen awoke at the sound of the bells, and got up to the window, to see what was going on. Then they saw standing at the door of the church a shining figure of a man, throwing beams from it in every direction. At this, the king and queen were astonished, and thought it was undoubtedly an angel who had come down from heaven, to tell some great tidings on earth. They deemed it best to welcome such a guest signally, ask mercy and intercession of him, and shew him due reverence. They put on their royal attire in all haste, and then walked out to the angel. Kneeling and lowly, they addressed him, and asked him for forgiveness of all their sins, entreating him, at the same time, for grace and mercy. He answered that he could grant their prayer nowhere but at the altar in the church. They followed now the angel up to the altar, and when they came there the angel turned round, and said he was ready to give them forgiveness for all their sins, on one condition. They asked him what the condition was. He said it was that they should both creep into the sack that was lying beside them, on the floor of the choir. They found the condition a good one, and crept both together into the bag. No sooner were they in the bag, than the angel seized the opening of it, and tied it tightly up. The king asked what this meant. The angel answered, shaking off all the candles at the same time: "My good king, I am no angel at all; I am, on the contrary, your worthy friend, master Grey-man, from Wall-nook. I have now stolen you and your queen, as you bade me last night, and I am going to give you a pardon for your sins by destroying both of you, (here he dragged the sack, without mercy, all along the floor of the church,) except you grant me, at once, a request I have to make of you, and swear, before you leave the bag, that you will fulfil it."

The king, seeing that nothing was to be done, but to grant all that Grey-man might ask for, made an oath that he would grant all Grey-man's wishes; whereupon Grey-man undid the bag, and let out the king and queen.

Then Grey-man said to the king, that he wished him to give him his daughter to wife, and, with her, the half of the kingdom, allowing him, moreover, to keep with him the old carl and wife from Wall-nook.

All this the king promised, and they made an agreement together, that so this should be.

Now Grey-man went to Wall-nook, and finding the carl and his old wife, bade them with a lofty and important air, to cleanse themselves a little, and put on better clothes, for now they had to make a little migration. Hearing this, they wondered what would come next; but their astonishment is not to be told, when they heard all that was coming to pass. In the day, Grey-man brought the carl and his old wife up to the palace, and they were well received. He married, after this, the king's daughter, and got with her the half of the kingdom. But at the wedding-feast he amused the guests by telling them that he was the son of a neighbouring king. He had got news of the intentions of the old carl in Wall-nook, and had come to an agreement with the priest, to make his words, upon which the carl had based all his plans, come true; saying that he hoped the old man had now got his cow paid a thousandfold.

Grey-man lived long and happily with his wife, and had the whole kingdom after the days of the king, his father-in-law, and governed it ably till his death. The carl and his old wife lived with him to their death, in great prosperity. And thus ends the story of Grey-man.

THE BROTHERS OF BAKKI.

AT a farm called Bakki, in Svarfadardalr, in the north of Iceland, there once lived, long ago, a farmer, who had three sons, Gisli, Eiríkr, and Helgi. They were notorious for their foolishness, and their silly doings have been very much spoken of, although few of them are told here.

Once, when the brothers were grown-up youths, they went out one day fishing with their father. On the sea, the father fell suddenly ill, and lay down. They had brought with them a keg full of whey and water mixed together, to drink. When their father had rested thus a while, he grew yet worse, and bade them give him the keg. The brothers were wont, when one of them addressed the other, to call out all three names, Gisli, Eiríkr, and Helgi, as none of them knew to whom in particular each name belonged. When, therefore, their father had asked for the keg, one of the brothers said: "Gisli-Eiríkr-Helgi, our father calls for the keg."

Then said another: "Gisli-Eiríkr-Helgi, our father calls for the keg."

Then came the third with the same observation; and this they went on repeating, until their father was dead, for none of them could understand what he wanted the keg for. From this it has passed into a saying in the language, that he who dies "calls for the keg."

After this, the brothers got to shore, and took the body of their father, and tied it on to a black mare that had belonged to him, and drove her away by herself, saying that she was sure to find the way. Some time afterwards, they found the mare without anybody on her back, and without bridle, grazing quietly in the pastures. They knew now that she must have found the right way, and therefore did not trouble themselves about what she might have done with their old father. After the death of their father, the sons lived at Bakki, and were called either: "The brothers of Bakki," or, "The fools of Bakki." They had the black mare, among other things left by their father, and took a great liking to her, and watched her very carefully.

Once, when a gale had arisen, they were afraid that she might be blown away. They therefore heaped up round her and over her, as many stones as they could find room for about her. After that, she was never blown away; but she never stood up again either.

While the brothers had yet their mare alive, they happened once to he travelling, all together, by moonlight, upon ice. One rode, but the others walked. They noticed that a man always rode at the side of the rider, but the oddest thing was that he spoke not one word, except that they heard him say, at each step that the mare took, something like, "Kári, Kári." Now this they found the more odd, for that neither of them happened to have that name. Then the rider thought he would ride on, that this fellow might be left behind. But the faster he rode, the oftener he heard, "Kári, Kári," and the others saw that the man rode at their brother's side, ride as he would, fast or slow. At last they got home, and saw the side-rider get off at the same moment as their brother, and take his horse into the stable at the same time as their brother led in the black mare. But when they got in from the moonlight, he vanished utterly from their eyes!

The brothers of Bakki had observed that, in winter, the weather was colder than in summer, as also that, the larger the windows of a house were, the colder it was. All frost and sharp cold therefore, they thought, sprung from the fact that houses had windows in them. They therefore built themselves a house on a new plan, without windows in it at all. It followed, of course, that there was always pitch-black darkness in it. They found that this was rather a fault in the house, but they comforted themselves with the certainty that, in winter it would be very warm, and, as to light, they thought they could contrive some easy means of getting the house lighted. One fine day, in the middle of the summer, when the sunshine was highest, they began to carry the darkness out of the house, in their caps, (others say in troughs,) and emptied it out when they came into the sunshine, and filled them again with the sunshine, which they carried into the dark room. Thus they worked hard the whole day, but, in the evening, when they had done all their best, they were not a little disappointed to find that it was as dark as before, so much so that they could not tell one hand from another.

Some one had told the brothers that it was wholesome to bathe their feet in hot water. But, as fuel was a scarcity with them, they never took the trouble of warming the water for their feet. Once, in their travels, they were fortunate enough to find a hot spring, and now they were very glad to get a hot foot-bath for nothing. They took off shoes and stockings, and sitting down all round the spring, put their feet into it. But, on looking closer, they could not tell which foot or feet belonged to each of them. Now they were fearfully put out for a while, and thus they sat in utter despair, till they saw a traveller passing by. They called him, and bade him by all means help them in finding out which feet belonged to each of them. The man walked up to them, and gave each of them a blow on the feet with his stick, and thus each recognized which belonged to him.

Once the Brothers of Bakki went into the forest to gather brushwood. It was a high steep slope of the mountain, whither they went. They picked up the wood, and tied it into bundles, to roll down the slope. But just as they were going to roll them down, it came across their minds that they could neither follow the bundles down, nor see what became of them when they got to the level ground. They therefore took the rede of putting one of themselves into one of the bundles, letting his head stick well out, that he might see the other bundles, and follow them down the slope. So they took Gisli, and tied him up in one of the bundles, leaving his head free to stick out well from the middle of the bundle. After this, they sent all the bundles down, and down they rolled to the level ground.

Eiríkr and Helgi, when they came down, began to search for their dear brother Gisli; but when they found him, his head was off, so that he could not at all tell them what had become of the bundles. Thus they lost Gisli; but, although only two of them were left, yet in speaking together, they always said as before, "Gisli-Eiríkr-Helgi," as the name of either of the two brothers that were left.

NOW I SHOULD LAUGH, IF I WERE NOT DEAD.

ONCE two married women had a dispute about which of their husbands was the biggest fool. At last they agreed to try if they were as foolish as they seemed to be. One of the women then played this trick. When her husband came home from his work, she took a spinning-wheel and carders, and sitting down, began to card and spin, but neither the farmer nor anyone else saw any wool in her hands. Her husband observing this, asked if she was mad to scrape the teazles together and spin the wheel, without having the wool, and prayed her to tell what this meant. She said it was scarcely to be expected that he should see what she was doing, for it was a kind of linen too fine to be seen with the eye. Of this she was going to make him clothes. He thought this a very good explanation, and wondered much at how clever his good wife was, and was not a little glad in looking forward to the joy and pride he would feel in having on these marvellous clothes. When his wife had spun, as she said, enough for the clothes, she set up the loom, and wove the stuff. Her husband used, now and then, to visit her, wondering at the skill of his good lady. She was much amused at all this, and made haste to carry out the trick well. She took the cloth from the loom, when it was finished, and first washed and fulled it, and last, sat down to work, cutting it and sewing the clothes out of it. When she had finished all this, she bade her husband come and try the clothes on, but did not dare let him put them on alone, wherefore she would help him. So she made believe to dress him in his fine clothes, and although the poor man was in reality naked, yet he firmly believed that it was all his own mistake, and thought his clever wife had made him these wondrous-fine clothes, and so glad he was at this, that he could not help jumping about for joy.

Now we turn to the other wife. When her husband came home from his work, she asked him why in the world he was up, and going about upon his feet. The man was startled at this question, and said: "Why on earth do you ask this?" She persuaded him that he was very ill, and told him he had better go to bed. He believed this, and went to bed as soon as he could. When some time had passed, the wife said she would do the last services for him. He asked why, and prayed her by all means not to do so. She said: "Why do you behave like a fool; don't you know that you died this morning? I am going, at once, to have your coffin made. Now the poor man, believing this to be true, rested thus till he was put into his coffin. His wife then appointed a day for the burial, and hired six coffin-carriers, and asked the other couple to follow her dear husband to his grave. She had a window made in one side of the coffin, so that her husband might see all that passed round him. When the hour came for removing the coffin, the naked man came there, thinking that everybody would admire his delicate clothes. But far from it; although the coffin-bearers were in a sad mood, yet nobody could help laughing when they saw this naked fool. And when the man in the coffin caught a glance of him, he cried out as loud as he could: "Now I should laugh, if I were not dead!"

The burial was put off, and the man let out of the coffin.

Now it came out that these women had thus tricked their husbands, and they got for it a public whipping at a parish court.

SUPERSTITIONS.

SUPERSTITIONS.

If the bed of a married couple be taken out for airing on a Sunday, man and wife will be separated.

If a riding-horse be shod on a Sunday, it will fall lame.

If the sea-skin clothes of a fisherman be mended on a Sunday, with thread and needle, the man will be drowned. Once, there lived at a farm called Nes, by the Seal-pool, a fisherman named Magnus. He had a woman to look after his clothes and goods, hight Gudrún. It was her unchanging custom never to mend Magnus' skin-clothes but on a Sunday, albeit Magnus repeatedly warned her. Now a good part of the fishing-season passed without anything happening worthy of note. One day Magnus went out fishing, as usual. That day, uprose a great storm, but all the fishermen got safe to shore, save Magnus, of whom nothing was seen. But, in the night, Gudrún awoke at hearing Magnus come to the window, near which she slept, and saying: "Thy needle-stitches, my Gudrún, have brought me into the sea." Gudrún was so frightened at this, that she was, for long afterwards, quite mad; but she told this story when she recovered.

Do not milk a cow, even if the udder be swollen with milk, on a Friday-fast, for then she will stand still till the next Friday or Tuesday.

Clothes should never be aired on a solstitial day, for then they will rot into rags.

If a man's first gift to his love be a knife, or scissors, or needles, or any iron instrument that has point or edge, their love will be short-lasting,—either pricked out, or cut over. The same, in any friendship.

If the good man go from home, the wife must not have the bed made the night after his departure, else they will nevermore share it together.

If a man chants in his bed, he will commit adultery.

If a pregnant woman gaze at the northern lights, her child will squint.

If a pregnant woman eat the flesh from the roof of a seal's mouth, her child will snuffle.

If a pregnant woman run much, her child will be dizzy.

If a pregnant woman walk under a half-roofed house, she cannot give birth to her child, save rafters be crossed over her; nor will her child be able to die, unless a cross be raised above him.

If a pregnant woman has walked between the cut-off head and the trunk of some animal, she cannot give birth to her child, unless she walks, in the same way, between a head and trunk, on the day of her delivery.

If a pregnant woman sit with her face turned towards the moon, her child will be a lunatic.

If a pregnant woman eat the eggs of a ptarmigan, her child will be freckled.

If a pregnant woman eat a falcon-stricken ptarmigan, her child will have a falcon-brow (or, say we, a port wine stain).

If a pregnant woman drink the leavings of cud-chewing beasts, her child will chew the cud.

If a pregnant woman so place a pot on the hearth, that its ears be turned straight from her, her child will either have four ears, or one of its ears will be on its forehead and the other on the nape of its neck.

If a pregnant woman eat the chin of a seal, the child will have a slit-chin.

If a pregnant woman eat with a spoon or a shell, aught out of which has been broken a part, her child will have a hare lip.

You must not file in the house where a woman is being delivered, for then the child will be still-born.

If a wanderer walk, with a bag tied on his back, into a house where a pregnant woman is, the child will be hump-backed.

One must not go, with a cord or band over one's chest and shoulder, into a house where a pregnant woman is, for then the child will have a yellow stripe across its own.

One must not carry, into a house where a pregnant woman is, a raven's feather, without having clipped it, for else the child will not speak.

A tongue-bone should never be thrown to dogs, nor into the sweepings, where a baby or a pregnant woman is in the house, for else the child will never get its speech. The bone should be stuck into a hole in the wall, or otherwise kept, for that will make the child speak the quicker.

Liver must never be given to young children unless they can pronounce the l, for else they will never do so.

One should not break the bone of a leg of mutton, for else any sheep its owner may afterwards have will break its leg.

A man must not eat the mark of a sheep's ear, for else he will become a sheep-stealer.

Eat butter to smoked meat one never should: they who do so will never become landowners.

Sick sheep should never be killed: they who do so will never become successful sheep-owners.

Neither a spider nor his web should ever be torn down: to do so is a sure sign of an unlucky life.

A spider hanging down in a house must not be torn down, but you must put your hand under it and say: "Up! up! fishing-carl; your wife lies ill in her child-bed, with eighteen children in her arms." Or, "Row up from below, fishing-carl, if you betoken fine weather: row down, if you promise foul."

In a dairy must one never chant, for then one sings in hunger and unblessing.

Fishermen should not sing at their line or net, nor when they are dredging up a landing-place for boats: it brings unblessing.

Dogs must never be allowed near fishing-tackle, nor be kept in fishing-boats: they spoil the catch.

Hunger and want are the steady companions of a household, where many ptarmigans are caught.

One must not comb one's hair in bed, for he who does so is sure to become bed-ridden for ever, except he say: "I cast from me sick-bed, and not my comb." If a wife comb her hair in bed, she will either have bad confinements, or lose her husband.

If a distaff be spun into the head of a child, the child will, thereafter, grow no more.

If a mouthful of meat be cut with the edge of the knife turned from you, instead of being cut towards you, that mouthful is cut for the devil.

A man who cannot read or write, must not scribble or scrawl on panels, ice, or snow, for thus he writes himself to the devil. Once, a man was writing, as it is said, on ice with the pointed spike of his staff; and after he had done so for a while, a stranger came to him, asking what he was about. He said that he was amusing himself by scribbling this spot of ice over. The stranger asked him to wait while he read what he had written already. The scribbler stopped, and the stranger looked for a while at the scrawlings, and then said: "Only a few letters are now wanting for you to have fully written yourself over to the devil." The stranger was no other than an angel from heaven.

If a man burn his own hair on purpose, he burns from him all riches.

If a man, in dressing himself, clothe fully one leg first, he dons misfortune; and, if he undress fully one leg first, he doffs his good luck.

If one pluck the grass that grows through the window, or through the roof, into the house, he has snapped the life-thread of one of his relatives, and will lose him.

If one stretch his arms across a door, from one post to the other, he will bring about the death of at least one of the inmates of the house.

Raven's-flint (black obsidian) should never be carried into a house, for it causes quarrels in the household.

Fire must not be borne into a house where there is fire already, for it causes fallings-out among the inmates

If a man or child walk backwards, he walks his mother down into the earth.

If children swear, a dusky spot comes on to their tongue.

If a child put fire into a fagot, and brandish it about alight, he will wet his bed the following night.

If a child be put out through the window, it must not be taken in again through the door, but through the selfsame window; otherwise it will grow no more.

If children sing or chant over their food, it affords them no nourishment.

If two chant at once, each a different ditty, they amuse the devil.

If one sit with workless hands, he sits with seven devils on his lap, and dandles the eighth.

If one walk with his hand behind his back, he drags after him the devil,—the which is a bad work.

If a rower let any part of his oar-handle stick out of his hand while rowing, the devil rows with him.

If one leave his scythe without first whetting it, the devil is sure to come and misbehave on the edge of it, in the meanwhile; the scythe has then lost its sharpness, till it be taken next to the smithy, and resharpened.

If one let big nails grow on his fingers, and afterwards cut them off, without parting them, he shoes the devil.

When nails are cut or shorn, each of them must be cut or bitten into three pieces, for else the devil picks them up, and adds a whole plank to the dead-ship.

If one's hair be cut by a waning moon, it will fall off, but will grow thick if cut by a waxing one.

If one turn to the north while his hair and nails are cut, he will thereafter be short-lived.

If one swing about him a stick, whip, wand, or aught that makes a whistling sound, he scares from him the Holy Ghost. Others say: "Do it not, for who knoweth what is in the air."

One must not beckon at the stars of heaven, or speak irreverently of them, for over whomsoever that so does will some vengeance come.

If a stone be thrown into the sea, it waxes wroth, and throws up heavy breakers and furious surf, wherein many ships are lost.

If a stone be thrown over a vessel that is putting to sea, that vessel will be lost, or will never return.

If one beckon to boats or ships at sea, or count them, they will all be lost.

If a path, in front of a dwelling-house or farm, be swept, there will come pouring rain.

If a priest row to sea, fishing, the church must, in his absence, be kept open, for then he will return safely to shore; otherwise, not. Nor must books be aired while the priest is at sea.

If a man eat the kidney of a seal, and give his friend of it also to eat, they will become enemies for the rest of their lives.

If the snuff of a candle burn after it has been thrown on the floor, it must not be put out, but be left to burn out and die of itself. The doing of this is a great act of mercy, and whosoever does the contrary will be grievously luckless all his life. And no wonder; for, somewhere in the eastern world, is a nation that has neither peace nor quiet, save only while such snuffs are burning. Others say that elves kindle their lights by such.

If a man let a light die out slowly, thus tormenting it, he will have a long death-struggle.

If there be none but ptarmigan-feathers in a bed, he who lies thereon cannot die.

He who stumbles in a churchyard will shortly die.

If the muscles or nerves be cramped at the same time in the crown of one's head and the soles of one's feet, one is feigh.

If two think of the same thing at the same time, he is feigh who tells his thoughts last, except he say: "I shall not die sooner than God will." So doing, neither is feigh.

If a sound of splitting be heard in some of the main beams of a house, its master will be short-lived.

If a light die on Christmas-eve, some one in the house will shortly die.

If one hear the sound, as it were, of pealing bells in the distance, and this sound echo for both ears at once, it bodes that he will soon hear the news of some one's death.

If one see a shooting-star, he will soon hear the news of death in that quarter wherein he saw the star fall.

If a raven sit on the roof of a house wherein a sick person is lying, and croak much, or pick with his bill much into the thatch, the sick man is feigh.

If straws or pieces of paper come to lie crossed on the floor, of their own accord, somebody is feigh in the house.

If a man, in the enjoyment of full health, suddenly feel loathing and disgust in eating what another has left, he is feigh who first ate.

If it rain into an open grave while it is being dug, it is commonly said: "It rains into the mould," and it is an omen that there will soon be need for digging another.

If one put on, in the morning, his stocking so awkwardly that the heel comes where the toe should be, he will have some distress in the day.

If one be hot in one foot and cold in the other, somebody envies him.

If one cut himself in coffin-making, so as to bleed, some one is feigh in the neighbourhood.

Seldom yawns one when two are together, except he be feigh, or they be not friends.

If a garter fall from the leg of a betrothed maiden or man, he or she will be deceived in love.

If two men die in the same farm-house, in the same half-year, the third will follow quickly.

If church-bells ring of their own accord, the priest is feigh.

If two ravens cross one another, in their flight over a church, some one in the village will soon die.

If many sheep annoy a single one, in the pen, it will shortly die.

If a hen crow, she crows calamity over home.

If snow-lightening pass a window, close within which a candle is burning, the snow-lightening runs into the candle-light and burns the house. That flame will not be quenched, save with the blood of seven brothers, begotten in wedlock without any sister being born between them.

The body of him who is born two nights before Paul-mass, or the day next before Agnes-mass, or eight nights before Brigid-mass, will not rot till doomsday.

Never open the windows at night, or, as some say, in the winter, except the sign of the cross be first made before them, or else unclean spirits will come in through them.

If cords be fixed to a coffin, they must be cut off before it be put into the grave, that the body may rise from the dead on the Judgment-day.

When a man dies in a family-room, the soul cannot get out, except the window be taken out; when the soul is thought to have got fairly out, the window must be put in again, inside out, that the soul may be unable to re-enter.

If you meet a funeral, you must not go straight against the corpse, for then an evil spirit who goes before the coffin will meet you.

If you sit on the threshold of a house, evil spirits hover round you.

It is a good remedy for sea-sickness, to cut a piece of the greensward in the churchyard and put it into one's shoes, before going to sea.

If one carry with him a tooth from a black dog who had no mixture of colour in his hair, he will never be barked at.

To carry in one's mouth a dead person's tooth, is a good preventive of toothache.

If one be tormented with pains in the ear, he shall take a nail from the same side of a coffin, and hold it in the passage of the ear: this will soon cure the pain.

If you find the body of a man who has died in the open air, you shall either put him in some way to rights, or spread something over his face, for else he will follow you in after life.

If you come into a house where is lying the body of a dead person, you shall make the sign of the cross over it, with the right hand, while you greet the people.

No goblin is so bold as to attack from in front a quite naked man; wherefore it is the best rede to take off all one's clothes, when one expects a goblin-onslaught.

If one wear his clothes turned inside out, he will never lose his way. A mitten turned wrongside in, leads to the door in a dark house.

If one put his shirt inside out, over himself when he goes to sleep, nothing unclean can approach him.

If you have a wart, and want to get rid of it, take the earth that lies next to the rotten bone of a dead person, and the wart will then soon fall off.

If a dying person cannot expire, take the priest's cope, and spread it over him or her, and soon will the ghost be given up.

If a man cannot sleep, put a cope under his pillow, without his knowledge; or the names of the Seven Sleepers, on a scrap of paper; or the book of the Psalms of David.

If you lose a tooth, put it either into a hole in an eastern-wall, or in a tomb in the church, for else there will never come a new tooth, in the place of the old one.

"God help me!" say people generally, when they sneeze, or "God help you!" when another sneezes. This custom arose first in the Black Pest, which raged in a certain district so awfully, that the people died wholesale therefrom. At last, it made its appearance at a farm, where lived a brother and sister. They noticed that those who died at the farm were first seized with a terrible sneezing. Seeing this, they were wont to say, whenever they sneezed: "God help me!" and were the only ones that survived in the district. Therefore, whenever one sneezes, pray God to help you, or him you hear sneeze, and so nobody will die from sneezing.

If a man or woman die childless, the man is punished in Val-hall by pulling coarse hair from wool, and the woman by working a churn, till the day of judgment.

If you kill a wasp with the little finger of the left hand, you get rid of seven deadly sins.

Everything you wish for yourself and do not obtain, falls to the lot of the old woman in Val-hall, except you add to your wish:—

"Let water and salt in Val-hall be ;
But let my wish be fulfilled for me !"

All sheep's thigh-bone-joints should be dug deep into the earth, and these words uttered over them: "Defend me as well from the mouth of hell, as I defend you from the mouth of dogs." This bone must not be thrown to dogs, because it is a fair king's-son, in spells, and will protect your herds from death, if you either stick it in a hole in some wall, or swallow it, saying at the same time: "I stick you in wall-hole; defend me from sheep-death, as I defend you from dog-mouths." If all did this, the fair prince would be freed from his spells.

Fog is a beautiful king's daughter, in spells. She will be freed from them, when all herdsmen agree in blessing her.

When sheep are driven from one farm to another, care must be taken to bring them into their new pastures, with a rising tide, for they will then find themselves at home; but, if they are brought thither with an ebbing tide, they will ever be trying to run away.

When meat is killed, beware to do it when the tide is rising; this makes one third more blood in the beast.

If a single man be good to cats, it shews that he will be good to his wife.

If one have a wart, uncovered by hair or clothes, and unseen by himself, it is a sign of wealth.

If one have a hairy neck, he will be a rich man.

If one cut his finger at table, it betokens that some new food will be given him.

If a knot come into one's garter, it is called a luck-knot, and something will be given to the wearer. But it must not be untied for three days.

If one sneeze in bed on a Sunday morning, something will be given to him, that week.

It is much better to sneeze on a Monday morning, than not to do so, for, thus saith the troll-woman:

"Better is a Monday sneeze
Than a mother's kiss;"

and this, you may depend upon it, is true. For, as trolls are true-hearted, so are they also true-spoken.

If you sneeze in your bed, on new year's morning, you will live through that year.

If you come to a farm, or house, while people are at their meals, you are not feigh.

If one be often dirty, he will succeed in getting wealth.

If your chin itches, you will taste a new dish.

If the palms of both your hands itch at once, you will receive some present. If the right itches, something out of your purse is meant; but, if the left, something into it.

If the latchet of your shoe get loose, you are near being married.

On their marriage-day, folk like to have good weather; but it is thought also a good sign, if, after the wedding, follow a mild dew and drizzle-showers, for these are a token of fruitfulness, and prosperous farming, and harmonious wedlock. But pouring rain is looked upon as signifying a violent rupture to come.

If the great toe, and the one next to it be equally long, their owner will marry his or her equal. But if one's second toe be the longer, one will marry above one; and if the shorter, below one.

If your left brow itch, something agreeable will happen to you. But if the right itch, some distress awaits you.

If your eyes itch, expect coming tears.

If your nose itch, it means that you will soon be angry.

If the passage of your ear itch, it means that you will hear some new tidings.

If the right cheek be hot, one is spoken ill of; but, if the left,—well. The left is the friend cheek.

If one hiccough, he is there in words, where he is not at table.

If one's hair be soft to the touch, and delicate, and thin, it is a sign of one's being good-natured; but hair of the qualities contrary to these, betokens a contrary temper.

Whosoever is hair-sore will be jealous.

If a man have tickling foot-soles, he will be jealous of his wife.

If one put a cap on to another's head, and the cap sit so well that the wearer need not put it to rights, the former shall fix whom the latter shall marry.

If a maiden or a wife throw sand on the feet of an unmarried man, he will not marry for a year from that day.

If a child be born with two teeth, it will speak soon, and become a poet afterwards. These teeth are called "Scald-teeth."

If children get teeth early, they will be short-lived; long-lived, on the contrary, if they get teeth late. If one can reach with his tongue up to his nose, he is assuredly a scald.

If a man can suffer a narrow boot, he will bear well the being under his wife's dominion.

If your foot-soles itch, you will tread in a feigh man's steps.

If a needle-woman prick herself with the needle wherewith she is sewing a piece of cloth for a man, some one will fall in love with that man before the cloth be worn out.

If one put down one's rake on the ground, spikes upwards, without looking after it, rain is betokened, and folk say: "Rake rain foretells," or "Rake rain calls."

When a man finds a bird's nest, for the first time in his life, he shall count the eggs, and take care to break none of them, for he will have as many children as he found eggs, and lose as many as he broke. But, if the eggs be deserted and addled, he will have as many bastards.

If, when you have just got a place at a farm, you yawn in your bed, you will soon leave the place again.

If two wash in the same water, they will soon quarrel.

If a dog lie with his head on his paws, towards the door, he is said to "prophesy guests." If he rest his head on the right paws, somebody of note will come. But if the dog turn his tail to the door, and look nathless towards it, lying curled up, some one of thieving disposition will come. Others say the dog expects respectable folk when he lays his head straight on both paws, but thieves if he lay it on one or the other.

If a stink be perceived in houses, somewhat like that of sour butter, it is called follower's-smell, or the smell of Lóki. When it is called follower's-smell, it is the smell of the ghost that follows the visitor, although the follower may be unseen itself. But those who call it the smell of Lóki, say that an unclean spirit is near, or that a poisonous worm is lying near the surface of the earth where the smell is smelt. But, whichever may be the case, it is always surer to spit in every direction, for such smell can never come from anything good.

If one stumble when leaving home, it betokens a happy and lucky journey; but a misfortune if the stumble happens on the way homewards, for "lucky-faring tells a home-forth, luckless a homeward fall."

It is said, that whosoever is born on a Sunday, is born to victory,—

On a Monday, to trouble;
On a Tuesday, to thriving;
On a Wednesday, to mould;
On a Thursday, to glory;
On a Friday, to wealth;
On a Saturday, to luck.

If three eagles fly, one after the other, great tidings are foreshadowed.

If a man's hair burn, it shews that he is not feigh.

If it only singe, it shews him near death.

If a woman put on a man's hat, it shews that she is fond of him.

A cat foretells thaw, when it washes itself, in winter, behind its left ear.

If a cat stretch itself so far, that the claws come forth on the front paws, it foretells a gale.

If old cats play in winter, it is a sign of bad weather approaching.

Never believe in a winter-fog, not even if there be but one night to summer.

If horses lie in pasture, before mid-winter, a hard winter is betokened.

A good winter is foretold if, before the end of August, snow fall three times on the mountains. Others say the same if snow fall on the mountains in each summer-month.

When rivers break up in winter, look surely for an approaching thaw.

On the last evening in winter, housekeepers used, of old, to put out a shell with water in it. If the water in the shell was frozen in the morning, they said that summer and winter had frozen together, and this betokened that the herbage in the ensuing summer would yield good food for sheep and cattle.

When the golden-plover comes, all great storms have past.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

The Grímsey Man and the Bear.—Once, in a winter, it happened in Grímsey, that the fire died out, and not in any one hut could fire be got. At this time it froze hard, but continued calm, so that the channel between Grímsey and the mainland was frozen over, and the ice thought strong enough to bear men. The people of Grímsey had mind, therefore, to send to the mainland for fire, and to this end they chose the three briskest and strongest men in the island. They went away early one morning, in calm weather, and a great many of the island-folk went with them out on the ice, and bade them farewell and God-speed. Nothing is told of their travels, till, at about the middle of the channel, they found the ice open; the rift was so long that they could not see out, over the end of it, and so broad that only two of the messengers could jump over it, to do which the third would by no means trust himself. The others bade him, therefore, get back to the island, they themselves continuing their journey towards the land. He stood on the edge of the ice, unwilling to return to the island, and looked a long look after his companions; then he decided to go along the water, till he might find, perchance, a point where the opening was narrower. When the day passed on, clouds gathered quickly, and a southern gale sprang up with rain and sleet; the ice suddenly began to melt, and at last the man was left on a piece of floating ice, drifting towards the main ocean. In the evening, this piece of ice was drifted against a large floe, up which the man went, and walked over it until he found a she-bear, resting over her young ones. The man was as cold as he was hungry, and in agonies of fear for his life. When the she-bear saw the man, she gazed at him for some time, and then, rising from her lair, went towards and round him, making him signs to come into her lair and lie down beside her cubs. This he did with but half a mind. After this, the animal laid herself down upon him, spreading herself out over him and her young ones, covering them all as well as she could, and, by her signs, managed to make him take her teat into his mouth, and suck, together with her cubs. Thus passed this night.

The next day, the animal rose up from her lair, and gave the man signs to follow her. When they came to the ice, not far thence, the bear flung herself down, giving the man to understand that he was to mount on her back. When the man had mounted, she shook herself till he could no longer hold himself on, and tumbled off. No more attempts were made by her, this time, but the man deemed this play of hers strange enough. Now three days passed in this way ; at nights the man rested in her lair and sucked her, but, every morning, she repeated the same exercise, making the man sit on her back and always shaking him off again. The fourth morning, the man could hold himself on her back, shake and twist herself as she would. This day, in the afternoon, she started from the floe, with the man on her back, and swam to the island. When they came to shore, the man beckoned his bear-friend to follow him, and they went home, and he ordered his best cow to be milked, and gave of the teat-warm milk to the weary bear, as much as she would have. Then he went before her, to his pen, and took forth from it two of his best wethers, tied them together by their horns, and flung them across the back of the bear, who swam away again, with her charge, to her young ones, and had a goodly feast of it.

This was a day of great rejoicing in Grímsey; for, while the islanders gazed in wonder after the bear, a boat was seen coming, sailing from the land, towards the island, having on board both the messengers, and the sorely-needed fire.

Death's Call.—Once, as was usual, the Bishop of Skálholt was visiting the churches in Hírtásídr, in Borgarfjördr. All day long, the bishop was unwontedly silent, and seemingly in gloomy thought, and only urged his men to make all the haste they possibly could, to get on towards the tenting-place, which was fixed to be down in the grounds of the ford of Hvítá, hard by the farm of Bjarnastadir. When they came thither, the men pitched the tent, but the bishop walked to and fro, alone in the grounds. When all was ready, the tent pitched, and everything in order, the servants told him of it, but he moaned heavily and said: "The hour is come, but the man is not." But, at the same moment, they saw where a man came riding, as swiftly as ever he could, towards the ford. Seeing this, the bishop went towards him, with his men, and said he desired much to speak with him. But, by so mad a wish to get into the river was the man seized, that he only gave the bishop, who told him that the stream was far from fordable, the short answer: "Delay me not; I am in haste." Then the bishop bade his folk seize upon the man and bring him into the tent. This did they; but, thereupon, the man grew so ill, that they thought every moment he would die, and it seemed as if he were struggling with death, and could not die. Then the bishop commanded water to be brought from the river, and given to the man to drink. No sooner were his lips and tongue wetted with the water from the river, than the man expired.

Thereupon, the bishop told them that he had heard from the language of the raven, in the morning, that Death had sent forth a call for this man, who was to be drowned in this river. Therefore it was that he could not die till he had tasted of this river's water.

The Death-message.—At the farm Múli in Thíngeyjarsysla, there lived once a dean, by name Thorleifr Skaptason. He was a learned man, and a great preacher, had a deep knowledge in many a hidden matter, and understood the language of ravens. One autumn day, he went from home, with one of his house-men as guide, to the trading-station of Húsavík. They had two loaded pack-horses, and had in mind to return home that same night. It was a long, but good and easy road. On the way, there are no difficulties to deal with; there is only one so-called Myrarlœkr (mire-brook), that flows in shallow branches over the land, from a bog, into the river Laxá (salmon-river).

It was early in the morning that priest Thorleifr went from home with his travelling companion. While they were reading their travelling-prayer, at the outset of their journey, a raven flew over the head of the priest, and screamed hideously. The priest looked up from his prayer, and said to the raven, so loud that the man could hear it: "This is a great lie of yours, confounded thief! This never will come to pass!"

When they had made an end of praying, the priest's companion asked what it was the raven had screamed. The priest answered: "The raven said, 'Thou, priest, shalt lie dead, to-night, in Myrarlœkr, and I shall pick out thine eyes.'" The priest declared that this was vain and vile twaddle of the raven's, which his companion also believed it to be. They rode to the trading-station, and returned homewards in the afternoon. When dusk came on, the weather grew thicker, and now they had got far back homewards, along the Laxá. Then said the priest to his companion: "Go you, on my errands, up to the two farms yonder, under the slope of the mountain; in the meanwhile, I will drive the horses quietly along, up the river, and do you ride straight from the farms into my path, that there be no delay brought about."

The man did as he was bidden, and now they parted. Having done his errands, the man rode on as far as he thought the priest had got in the meanwhile. He came upon the pack-horses on their way home, but of the priest he saw nothing. He then rode back along the river, till he came to Myrarlœkr. Here he found the priest's horse, standing over its dead master, who lay on his back in the brook, the water being so shallow that it did not nearly flow over his face. And on the dead body sat a raven, and had already picked out one of the eyes.

The Sorb-trees.—In ages past, it is related that, in the Westman-islands, there lived a brother and sister of good family. It so happened that the girl became pregnant, while she was yet a young damsel at home. Because the brother and sister loved each other dearly, evil tongues spread abroad the lying tale, that the brother was father to the child. This ill account came also to the ears of the judge on the islands, and he at once set afoot an inquiry or trial. It came to nought, that the brother sware, highly and clearly, that he had no part in this crime wherewith he had been evilly charged; he witnessed freely and boldly, that he was innocent; his sister none the less boldly attested his perfect innocence, and, before the judge, named her child's father, who had, at that time, left the islands. But, it being the custom in those days, that, in cases of this kind, the judges should use greater harshness than in most others, (and thus they passed one sentence of death after another, upon the luckless ones who were brought to their trial, there being nothing in support of that sentence but an unproved belief,)—it came, at last, in this case also, thereto. Brother and sister were sentenced to death, and, by power of the sentence, executed. When they mounted the scaffold, it is said, they looked up to heaven, and, in tears, offered up a prayer to God, that, in his righteousness, he would prove their innocence after their death, as the men had not believed it in their lifetime. They also prayed their parents to do their best in getting them buried together in the churchyard. After the execution, and large gifts to church and clergy, as was the custom in those days, the poor parents at last gained leave to bury their children in the churchyard; but leave to bury them in the same grave, could not by any sacrifice be got. They should be buried, one on each side of the church, and this was done accordingly. When time passed, folk saw that a sorb-tree shoot sprang forth from the grave of each of these children, growing naturally up, till its branches reached those of the other, over the top of the church. And folk came from this to the conclusion that, as these trees, the symbols of innocence, had sprung from the tombs, without any hand to plant them, God had declared thereby to the living, that this loving sister and brother had been put to death sinless. But, that the branches united, and, as it were, embraced each other over the roof of the church, wreathing together leaves and buds, was taken as a sign of the innocent and lovely converse of these children in their lifetime, and of their longing and last wish to rest together, in one grave, after death.

Thus grew and stood these sorb-trees, till the Algerian pirates, in the 17th century, cut them down, and threatened to come again, with no less ruthlessness, to these islands, when the trees should have grown, for a second time, as high as before. But they have grown no more, nor will they ever again shew a monument over innocence slain by the wicked hand of merciless law-men.

The Moon and the Sheap-stealer.—There was once a sheep-stealer who sat down in a lonely place, with a leg of mutton in his hand, in order to feast upon it, for he had just stolen it. The moon shone bright and clear, not a single cloud being there in heaven to hide her. While enjoying his gay feast, the impudent thief cut a piece off the meat, and, putting it on the point of his knife, accosted the moon with these godless words:—

"O moon, wilt thou
On thy mouth now
This dainty bit of mutton-meat?"

Then a voice came from the heavens, saying:—

"Wouldst thou, thief, like
Thy cheek to strike
This fair key, scorching-red with heat?"

At the same moment, a red-hot key fell from the sky, on to the cheek of the thief, burning on it a mark which he carried with him ever afterwards. Hence arose the custom in ancient times of branding or marking thieves.

The Virgin Mary and the Ptarmigan.—Once, the Virgin Mary summoned all the birds to meet before her. When they came thither, she commanded them to wade through flaming fire. Knowing her to be queen of heaven, and a powerful queen too, they dared not to disobey her order, and jumped all into the fire and through it, save the ptarmigan. When the other birds came through the fire, their feet were scorched to the skin, and have remained so ever since. But the ptarmigan, the only disobedient bird, did not fare a whit better, albeit she got no scorched feet; for Mary grew angry with her, and laid upon her the curse, that she should be the greatest of faint-hearts, the most harmless and defenceless among birds, on the one side, but, on the other, the most persecuted, and should never enjoy an hour in her life free from the fear of being persecuted, save on the day of Whitsuntide. The falcon should be her worst foe, and most dangerous persecutor, and constantly prey upon her flesh. But, so far had Mary mercy upon the ptarmigan, that the bird should be allowed to change colour, according to the seasons, being white as the snow in winter, but brown-grey as the ~~w~~heather in summer. This curse and mercy have ever since rested upon the poor ptarmigan, by the power of the unchangeable act of Mary, the queen of heaven. The falcon, which before this sentence was passed was the brother of the ptarmigan, never remembers his kinship to his sister, till he comes to her heart. For then breaks his sorrow first forth, as it comes into his mind that he has eaten his sister.

THE END.

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